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GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, PUBLISHERS,
Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

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Vol. V.

W. M. B.
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CHAPTER I.

"Boy, I will show thee a marvelous sight. The like has never been seen upon this earth before by mortal man."

Our scene opens in India, many years ago.

An old man, strange and weird in appearance, and garbed in the most grotesque manner, sat in a cave. Opposite him sat a lad, a bright, blue-eyed fellow, with light curly hair. Between the two there was a great contrast, save that both were dressed in the most fantastic style.

The weird-looking old man was a Guelse, and a magician. He was very old, and his aspect was grave, save when his eyes rested upon the beautiful face of the lad before him; then there came a softened expression, and there was tenderness in his voice.

After making the declaration with which we open our narrative, the old man suddenly exclaimed:

"Look yonder!"

The boy looked in the direction indicated—a remote corner of the cavern—when suddenly there appeared a bright ball of fire, which illuminated the cavern as though the sun had suddenly shot its rays through some hitherto undiscovered clefts. A moment the light shone, and then the old man waved his hand and the light disappeared, and all was in darkness again.

The lad gazed in rapt amazement, and the old magician smiled and said:

"You see I command the mystery of fire. Behold!"

Again there came a ball of fire, rivaling in its brilliancy even the rays of the sun, and here and there shot forth other balls of fire, until the light became so bright the lad's eyes were dazzled, and he covered them with his hands, when the old magician once again waved his hand, and the radiance disappeared and darkness succeeded.

"Didst thou ever see aught like that, boy?"

"Never, save when I raise my eyes to look at the sun."

The old man smiled proudly and said:

"Aha! it is a mystery."

"It is indeed a mystery."

"And wouldst thou know the mystery?" queried the old man.

"I would."

"And thou shalt. But first let me continue the wonders I would show thee. I said thou shouldst behold sights the like of which the world had never seen, and I will make good my promise, and then will I teach thee the secret, so when I am gone away thou canst call forth the fire and do strange things."

The lad was indeed amazed at the wonderful phenomenon that he had beheld, and his curiosity had been aroused as only the curiosity of youth can be; and as our narrative progresses we will explain more fully the incidents which led up to the startling *dénouements* we have presented.

The old magician retired behind a screen, made of tiger-skins, and his voice issued from his covert, saying:

"Look!"

The boy looked, and a sight met his gaze that caused his eyes to fairly start from their sockets. There appeared a figure seemingly moving through the air. It stood upon nothing; it was not sus-

pended from anything, but floated like some supernatural figure of light, and it was the semblance of a beautiful girl with lovely blue eyes, long curls, a complexion of rarest beauty, and features absolutely perfect in their classic contour.

As stated, the lad gazed with rapt attention until the figure faded away, dissolved from view, and then the old magician came forth and said:

"Thou didst behold?"

"I did."

"Didst thou mark well the features?"

"I did."

"And what thinkest thou?"

"I believe it was an angel called down from heaven."

The old magician smiled and said:

"No; it was the semblance of one who may some day go to heaven. But I've a tale to tell thee."

The youth resided in the village near where the cavern was located of which the old magician was the sole inhabitant. The lad was the adopted son of a Frenchman resident in India. He had known the old magician ever since he could remember anything, and at the time of the opening of our narrative Pierre Bindalais was seventeen years of age.

The lad had never known how he had become the adopted son of the old Frenchman. He had no knowledge as to his parentage. He had been told that he was but an adopted son; that was all. He had often asked his father to tell him something about himself, but the old Frenchman merely answered: "Some day I will tell you all." But the promised information had never come, and Pierre was still in ignorance at the time our narrative opens.

As stated, the lad had known the old magician since he was a little child. The old man was always fond of the boy, and the two had spent hours together through the days of several years. He had bid the lad be silent as to many things that occurred between them, and during all the years he had shown a strong affection for the lad. He had taught him many strange tricks of magic, had initiated him into mysteries of the most occult character, but had laid upon him the strictest injunction of secrecy, and had exacted a promise that the lad would merely learn and remember, and hold, but never practice or betray his knowledge until such time as the injunction of secrecy should be removed.

And so the years had slipped away. The lad had become expert in all the mysteries of Oriental magic. He had obeyed the injunction of secrecy, and not even to his adopted father had Pierre Bindalais made known his accomplishments.

And so, as stated, the years had rolled by until the day when our narrative opens, and then Pierre had beheld sights such as had never been opened up to him before.

As will be recollected, the old magician had said, 'I've a tale to tell thee.' Never before had he intimated to Pierre such a proposition.

"And when will you speak?" demanded the youth.

"I will tell thee a strange tale to-day. I know that which is unknown to thy father. Thou hast oft asked him to tell thee of thy parents. He has said to thee, 'Wait.'"

"How do you know these facts? I have never told you," declared Pierre.

"No, thou didst not; but thy father has come to me many times and demanded that I should tell the tale to him which I propose now to relate to thee. There are to be no more secrets between us. It is thy right to know all, and thou shalt. But first, answer me: thou didst mark well the face of the figure I showed thee?"

"I did."

"And if thou shouldst ever meet the original of the semblance thou didst behold, wouldst thou then carry the recognition?"

"Most certainly."

The old magician was thoughtful a few moments, and then said:

"What I tell thee thou must keep to thyself."

"I will."

"Then listen," commenced the old magician. "Like thee, boy, I was an orphan. Unlike thee, however, the mystery of my parentage will never be solved. All I know is that, when a mere child, I was adopted by an old magician, and instructed in the mysteries of his art, and when I became a man I was the most skillful magician in all India. I traveled in company with other magicians, and we performed before monarchs. We traveled into Persia, and went through all the kingdoms of Asia. We visited China and Japan, and everywhere we astonished those who witnessed our performances. And so matters progressed until I made the acquaintance of an Englishman whom I met in my travels, and between us there sprung up a warm attachment. We became mutual instructors, he teaching me the English language and I teaching him a few of the mysterious arts of magic; and when my English friend was killed in battle, as he eventually was, I mourned him, and finally determined to visit the land whence he had come. I went to England, and afterward traveled all over the continent of Europe. I became a student in Germany in one of the scientific schools, and became proficient in chemistry and other studies. I was an apt scholar, and acquired much scientific information of great value.

"I received many wonderful suggestions while pursuing my course of study, and determined, after I had graduated, to return to my native land and work out the many problems that had suggested themselves to me. I did so, and I made discoveries far in advance of many that have since been given to the world. Strange enough, during all this time I remained a devout worshiper at the shrine of Buddha; but there came a time when a great change came over me.

"There were many missionaries then in India, and I made the acquaintance of one of them—a young man who had come from America with his young wife. He was a noble young man, and we soon became as brothers. We were both of a scientific turn of mind, and we had many long arguments on religious questions, and the hour arrived when my eyes were opened to the truth. I was led to forsake the religion of Buddha and become a Christian, and from that moment I lost caste and became an object of scorn among my own people. And now, Pierre, comes the most startling of revelations. The missionary—my friend—who turned me from the worship of Buddha to the worship of the God you worship, was your father."

The handsome lad leaped to his feet, and for a moment his agitation was so great that he stood speechless; but at length he seized the arm of the old magician and demanded:

"Where is my father now?"

The old magician raised his eyes heavenward and extended his long arm upward, and answered:

"There, my boy. He is dead."

"Tell me all about it," said Pierre, excitedly.

"I will. Your father and mother were massacred when you were a child of three summers. I tried to save them, but failed. I did succeed in saving you, however. Now you know why it is that all these years I have taken such an interest in you. It was I who carried you, after the massacre, to the old Frenchman, Pierre Bindalais. It was I, also, who induced him to adopt you, and he is the only one who knows anything whatever concerning your parentage, and his knowledge consists only of what I have chosen to reveal to him."

"My father and mother were both murdered?"

"Yes. There was an uprising of the natives, and every European in the village was killed except two, whom I rescued: you and a girl baby. I carried you both in my arms many miles, through forest and jungle, and I secured a father for you, as I said before, in the person of good Monsieur Bindalais, who gave you his name, and who loves you now as though you were his own son."

"What became of the girl baby you rescued?"

"I carried her many miles from here. She was the child of an English missionary, and I found a friend for her in the widow of an English officer, who afterward adopted her."

"Where is she now?"

"If she is living she is probably in England. I kept track of her until about six years ago, when her adopted mother died. Before her death she confided the girl to a friend who was about to return to England. I did not learn of the lady's death and the disposition of the child until several months after she had been taken to England, and I have not heard from her since. The figure of light that I called forth awhile ago of a beautiful girl was her picture as she looked when last I saw her."

Pierre was silent a few moments, as though in deep thought.

"Will you explain to me all the mysteries that I have beheld?" he asked, suddenly.

"I will in good time. But first let me tell you my wishes. I hold something in trust for the girl; but I shall never see her again: my days are numbered. I know that I have but a few weeks to live."

"Why do you talk thus?" asked Pierre, a frightened look overspreading his face. "You look as strong as ever."

"Oh, yes! I know I look strong, but I know death is near. I

can almost name to the minute the time I have left me. And now listen, Pierre: I charge you with the task of finding Emily."

"The child's name is Emily?"

"Yes, the girl's name is Emily; for you must remember she is almost a woman now. She is but one year younger than yourself, and you will be eighteen in four months."

"And I must find Emily?"

"Yes, you must find her."

"May I ask what it is that you hold in trust for her?"

"Yes; I will show you what it is, my son; and then I will give you full instructions as to all that I desire you to do."

The old magician retired behind his screen of tiger-skins for a moment, and then returned and showed Pierre a sight that caused his heart to stand still.

CHAPTER II.

DURING all the years that Pierre had visited the old magician's cave, he had never been behind that tiger-skin screen. The old man had bid him never ask to go there. But the time came when the mystery was explained. The tiger-skin screen was but a guard to the entrance to a side cavern where the great investigator conducted his experiments; and the marvelous results that he obtained will be exhibited to our readers as our narrative progresses.

As stated, when the old magician came from behind the tiger-skin screen he exhibited something which caused Pierre to gaze in amazement. In his hand the old man carried a silver casket about eighteen inches in length, twelve in width, and evidently of great weight. He sat down, but did not immediately open the box.

"Pierre," he said, slowly, "I am about to reveal to you all my secrets. You are the adopted son of my heart, and Emily is my adopted daughter. You two are the only ties that bind me to earth; and feeling that I am about to depart, I propose to leave to you two all my possessions."

Having thus spoken, the magician touched a spring, the cover of the casket flew up, and the boy's eyes rested upon a collection of jewels such as has rarely been rivaled. A moment the lad stood and silently gazed at the great display of sparkling gems, and then he exclaimed:

"How magnificent! What a wonderful collection!"

"Yes, my son, it is one of the most valuable collections of gems in existence beyond doubt. I have been sixty years in getting it together. As I told you, I was once the greatest magician in India. I was the interpreter of dreams, the reader of signs, and many times have my services been sought by kings and princes, and because of the wonderful accuracy of my prognostications they have rewarded me with many of the most valuable of gems. I have never disposed of a gem that came into my possession, and the result is that this is, I believe, the finest and most valuable single collection of gems in the world. I could carry them to any court in Europe and receive millions of money in exchange for my treasures; but I never hoarded them up with any such idea. There was a time when I indulged a dream of life, and it was in the hope of the fulfillment of that dream that I kept these gems. That dream was never realized, and the time came when my love centered on Emily and you, and I determined to keep these jewels for you two."

"For Emily and me?"

"Yes. When I am gone it will be your mission in life to find Emily, and then you will tell her all that you have learned from me, and you will turn over to her a share of this wealth. And this is not all I possess. I have other treasure, consisting of gold, safely hidden, and I will, in good time, reveal to you its hiding-place."

"And when am I to go forth on my mission?"

"It may be years yet."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Pierre, joyfully.

"Why are you glad?"

"Because it means that you may live for many years yet."

"No, my boy, it does not mean that. I told you my days were numbered, and I meant what I said. I am liable to die at any moment. I am a very old man—older than you think. Yes, I have lived over a century."

Pierre stared at the old man incredulously.

"Yes, lad, I am more than a hundred years old; and strange things have happened in this world, and great changes have occurred since I became a man. But the hour of my departure draws near. It is possible that I may live a few months, or I may die in a few weeks, or a few days. I am ready to go at any time. This heart of mine, which has throbbed so vigorously for over a century, sometimes loses a beat; its pulsations are sometimes faint and irregular. Yes, I know that my end draws near, and, as I said, I am not sorry to go. I am only thankful to have learned of the true God. In that world beyond I shall renew my youth, and I will be one of the redeemed of heaven. Here, I am an outcast, a pariah, a despised slave. Had I not hidden myself all these years in this cavern I would have been maltreated, abused, and spit upon wherever I went. No, no; we will not talk further of my going or staying. But the chances are that there are many years of life yet remaining to you. There is much misery, much ignorance in the world. You can live and do good; you can teach the world; for it will remain with you to give forth the results of all my years of study and experiment. I know how good your heart is, my son. I knew your father, I knew your dear, good mother. I know the love that animated their hearts toward all the poor and ignorant and down-trodden. It is not strange that you have a noble heart. It comes to you as a birth-right, and I have aided in developing your mind. I have studied you well. I have seen you grow and ripen, and I am well pleased to reveal all my secrets to you, and also to bestow upon you the accumulated wealth of a century of saving."

"You were well acquainted with my father and mother?"

"Yes."

"I am an American?"

"Your parents came from that far-away country."

"Then what is my real name?"

The old magician hesitated a moment, seemed lost in thought, and then said:

"There is good reason why I should not answer your question now. I would advise you—nay, command you—not to assume your own name until you return to your native land—for some day you will go to America."

"But what is my real name?"

"I will give you certain manuscripts, and in them you will find all you wish to learn; but that is a matter we will speak of more at length later on. I have more wonders to show you, and then you shall have my secrets."

Pierre was a sensible lad, and he did not press his request. He had been well educated. His step-father was a linguist, and had taken much pride in instructing his adopted son. He had secured for him English instructors also, and the lad was well read in general history. Indeed, all he required was a mingling with the world to develop and make of use to him his liberal education.

After some further talk between Pierre and the old magician, the former asked:

"If I am not to go upon my mission immediately after your death, when am I to go?"

"You forget, my boy, the good man who looks upon you as his son."

"That is true. I must never forget him."

"You must never reveal to him all that I have revealed to you, however. What he is to know, I will tell him. From you he must learn nothing. He must not know you have learned all my secrets. He must not know that I have taught you so that now you are possibly the most accomplished magician in the world. No, no; you must wait until the good Pierre Bindalais, your adopted father, has followed me to the grave, and then you will be free—your own master. I will give you great wealth, and he will add to it. You can not have too much, for the world is a broad field in which to exercise your beneficence, and didst thou possess all the treasure of the Indies, you could relieve but a small part of the sorrow and misery in the world. No, no; you will be a good son as long as old Monsieur Bindalais shall live, and then you will be free to go. But now let me show you more of my power. Come; we will walk forth to the jungle. You have heard that a tiger has been seen there?"

"Yes; and all the people hereabouts are in terror. Indeed, messengers have been sent over to the garrison for some of the officers to come over to kill the beast."

There came a smile to the old man's shrunken visage as he said:

"I have already seen the tiger. I have tracked him down. I can lead you to his lair. Yes; we will go and find him."

"Do you mean that we shall go alone?"

"Yes; why not?"

The lad gazed at the old man in astonishment.

"I do not understand why we should go alone to encounter this fierce beast."

"I wish to demonstrate a phase of my power which you know not of. I will show you how I can master this fierce animal with but a wave of the hand."

Pierre feared his good old friend was going mad; but when he remembered what really wonderful things the old magician had done, he said:

"I will follow you, even to death."

"You need not fear. I would not lead thee into the slightest peril. No, no! I desire to show thee how you can master the fiercest animals; and being able to subdue them with but a wave of the hand, how much greater will be thy power over men. Come; we will go now, lest the officers from the garrison reach there before we do and slay the tiger ere I have shown you the power which is mine and shall be yours."

It was still early in the day when the old magician and Pierre determined to go forth to meet the tiger, that terrible beast, the terror and scourge of India. Pierre would have gone to his home to secure weapons, but the old magician said:

"No, my boy; we need no weapons save this;" and he exhibited a haft knife of peculiar design.

The two proceeded along through the gully which led from the cavern, and soon they were upon the road leading to the jungle. The old man was a rapid walker despite his years, and Pierre was a powerful lad. He could have walked all day and not have been exhausted. They got beyond the suburbs of the town and moved rapidly onward toward the tiger's lair. They met few people, as it was well known that a tiger was in the vicinity, and all stragglers were careful to keep within the limits of the town.

It was two hours before they reached the jungle, and the old magician plunged fearlessly forward through the dense undergrowth.

Pierre had every confidence in his good old friend; but despite his confidence his blood did run a little cold at the thought of meeting a tiger unarmed. Still, he was no coward, and where the old man dared go he could do no less than follow.

They had been making their way with great difficulty through a place where the underwood was almost impenetrable, when presently they emerged into a large space comparatively clear of woods. On one side there was an ascent, thinly scattered with trees, and in the latterly direction there was a spot upon which there was a tolerably thick growth of high grass. Here the magician came to a halt.

Pierre suspected they were near the lair of the tiger. He looked upon the face of the old man. It was calm. There was no sign of excitement or fear. In a low tone the lad asked:

"Is the tiger here?"

"He will come in a moment," was the firm answer.

There followed a few seconds of silence; and then, in a low whisper, Pierre again asked:

"Where shall I stand?"

"Where you are. I am to show you my power, and I want you near me, so that you can see what I do, in order that you may learn this most occult science; for I intend that my power shall also be yours. Look there!"

The lad looked in the direction indicated and saw the tall grass swaying to and fro; and then, despite his confidence and courage, his heart beat fast; for he knew the fierce animal, who could with one tap of his paw kill the strongest man, was approaching, and in his momentary terror he said:

"There is still time for us to get away."

"Be silent, and watch."

Pierre had never heard the old magician speak in so stern a tone before, nor had he ever beheld such a stern expression upon his face.

A moment passed, and then a thrilling sight was presented. The tiger emerged from the grass and stood in full view. He was a beast of immense size; his eyes glared, flecks of foam dripped from his lips, his great tail beat the ground, and his body swayed to and fro with an undulating motion, like that of a snake when about to spring upon its victim.

The tiger commenced to move forward on its belly, crawling like a cat, and the magician did not move or show the least sign of fear.

A weird thought passed through Pierre's mind. He thought it possible that the old magician, in a freak of madness, had determined to die a willing victim of the tiger.

The animal still crawled forward, its long, lithe body in an attitude that would enable it to make the fatal spring when within the proper springing distance. Nearer and nearer it came, and still the magician did not move; and Pierre thought all was lost—even the nerve of the old magician—for the fierce beast had approached to within three or four yards, when suddenly its motions ceased; the animal stood stiff and stark, as though suddenly stricken with death, or as though it had been transformed into stone. The fierce light had faded from its eyes, and they became fixed and set as though the animal was dead.

"Dost thou see?" demanded the old magician in a calm, low tone.

"Is the beast dead?"

"No; look now."

The lad looked, and the fierce animal appeared to have once more become imbued with life.

"It lives, you see."

"Yes, it moves: it will spring upon us."

"No, no! Look now!"

The lad looked, and again the animal had become motionless and rigid.

"Thou dost see?" said the magician.

"Yes. What wondrous power is this?"

"Thou hast no fear now?"

"None."

"Thou hast seen how I have subdued yonder fierce animal?"

"I have."

"Thou art strong of arm?"

"I am."

"Thou hast courage?"

"Yes."

"Thy nerves are well set?"

"They are."

"Take this knife."

"What would you have me do?"

"Advance, and with one stroke bury it in the brain of the monster."

Pierre could not control a tremor that passed over his frame.

"Ah, thy heart fails thee!"

"But the tiger lives!" exclaimed the lad. "If I go near it, with one stroke of its paw it will kill me."

"Then thou dost not trust my word?"

"I do; but—"

"Would I bid thee advance to death?"

"No."

"I bid thee go and strike the beast through the brain!"

"I will do as you have bid me."

The lad hesitated a moment, and then, with a firm step—and, despite what the magician had said, he believed he was really advancing to his death—went forward, and as he advanced the animal lay still and rigid. When the youth was close upon the animal the magician said:

"Pat him on the head ere you strike."

Pierre reached forth his hand and patted the tiger on the head. The animal did not move. It remained rigid; and yet it was warm, and the flecks of foam were still dripping from its black jaws.

"Now strike!" called the magician.

Pierre raised the knife aloft, and with a powerful swing the knife descended: it crashed through the skull and sunk deep into the tiger's brain; and with a slight tremor the huge animal rolled over on its side dead.

"Aha! Dost thou believe me now?"

Pierre was silent, and the magician continued:

"Thou hast seen my power: it shall be thine. Come; the hour has arrived when thou must know all my secrets."

Pierre had indeed been a witness of the wonderful power of the old magician. A royal Bengal tiger, full of life and furious energy, had issued forth from the thicket thirsting for blood. It crept up stealthily to strike down its prey. It had advanced to within a few yards of its victims, when suddenly the magician waved his hand, and the huge, wiry animal became paralyzed. This was indeed a marvelous exhibition of power.

"Thou hast seen?" repeated the old magician.

"I have seen," answered Pierre.

"And dost thou desire this power?"

"I do."

"I tell thee now it will never fail thee. Observe: thou art full of life and energy."

"I feel so."

"Thou canst move, advance or retreat at thy will?"

"Certainly."

"Hist! Thou canst do neither!"

The youth took a step forward, when the magician waved his hand, and suddenly the very life-blood became congealed in the youth's veins. He could neither move hand nor foot. He was as one dead, and a fearful numbness settled all through his muscles. As the lad stood helpless, there rested a strange gleam in the old man's eyes, and upon his face sat enthroned a pleased expression.

"Thou canst neither move nor speak now."

It was true. Pierre could not move, and his tongue appeared to cleave to the roof of his mouth. A moment passed, and then the old magician again waved his hand, and the lad's natural powers returned.

"Aha! Now thou knowest my powers!"

"'Tis strange!"

"This power thou shalt possess, my son, so that when thou goest forth after I am gone, thou canst hold an enemy at bay with but a wave of thy hand."

"This is indeed marvelous!"

"So it may seem to thee; but, after all, it is but the employment of a force in nature. I have discovered the secret after years of study. I will impart it to thee, firmly believing that thou wilt not make base use of so great a power."

"I can never acquire this gift of power," said Pierre.

"Oh, yes, thou canst! And when thou knowest the secret thou wilt see how easy is the exercise of the power. I have told thee I had traveled in Europe and China. It was in the latter country that I secured my first knowledge of a certain force in nature. It was known to a few learned men; but they had not discovered its uses. I learned all I could about it there, and then I returned to India, and for many years I worked upon the discovery, with the result that I have advanced the knowledge of its uses until it is possible for me to perform the feats thou hast beheld."

"I can see that it is a dangerous power," observed Pierre.

"Yes, it is a dangerous power; and when I disclose it to thee I will put thee under oath never to reveal it until thou art near thine own end; and then thou shalt reveal it to but one man, and he must be put under the same oath of secrecy as I shall put thee. Since I have been working upon this wonderful force, others have also been studying and developing it; but none of those who have studied it have attained to the power I have. I discovered the secret through accident, after all, after long years of experiment, and it is probable that many years will pass before another will learn what I know. Come, my boy; hast thou guessed the force?"

"Is it magnetism?"

The old magician smiled and answered:

"It is electricity. The secret of electricity has long been known, and it has become a useful agent to man; but, mark you, I will unfold to thee even now an idea! The electric force can only be utilized when sent over conductors. This mighty science is still in its infancy; but I have gone beyond all other students, and my secret is the projective electric force—without the use of conductors. Dost thou understand my meaning?"

"I but partially understand it."

"Thou shalt fully understand it. I know thou art an apt scholar."

The old magician and Pierre were returning to the cavern, and were in a lonely part of the road, when suddenly a horrible-looking object, in the form of a human being, approached them, and the old magician said:

"Ah! Behold, there is a Phasigar, boy! Watch the greed that shines in his eyes. See! He will attempt that which is the Phasigar's only occupation: he will attempt to murder and rob us. As a rule, they never attack more than one person at a time, unless they are in desperate straits. Yet, again, they may calculate that, I being an old man and thou a mere stripling, we two count as one. They always approach with hands outstretched, imploring alms."

"You say 'they.' I see but one man."

"True; but there are others lurking in the thicket. This is fortunate, for I will now have an opportunity to apply my power at a moment of dire need."

We will state for the information of our readers that the Phasigars are a tribe of professional thieves and murderers. They practice peculiar methods, and are a cruel and relentless class of criminals.

The old magician had recognized the identity of the wretch at a glance, and under ordinary circumstances would have known his peril; but possessed of his great secret, carrying with it its wonderful power, he feared not.

The magician and Pierre came to a halt as the robber approached; and, as the magician had announced, the fellow came in the rôle of a mendicant. A more abject-looking creature could scarcely be imagined. The fellow acted as though he had not strength sufficient to drag one limb after the other: whereas, in reality, he was a sinewy rascal with muscles like whip-cords and possessed of a strength and endurance that was simply marvelous.

The Phasigar, as stated, approached in the most abject manner and began with a tale of suffering and need.

It is known that there is a method for exciting the wrath of a cobra, the same as the waving of a red handkerchief will madden a bull, and the old magician, while listening to the fellow's tale, said to Pierre:

"I will unmask this wretch."

"Hold! He may indeed be in great need: his tale touches my heart."

"It is fortunate, then, that I am with thee, or thou wert a doomed lad. I will show thee what a despicable wretch he is. I will speak a few words to him that will cause him to attempt to spring at us in fury; but thou needst not fear; leave all to me. I will first madden and then subdue him."

The mendicant's tale of woe was a long one, and when it was ended the magician uttered a few words in the Phasigar's native tongue, and there came a change in the wretch's whole demeanor that was simply astonishing to behold. An instant he glared in surprise; then there came a fierce light to his eyes; his decrepit and bent form suddenly became erect; his head and hands moved restlessly, and quick as a flash he drew a knife and stood ready to spring forward.

He cast furtive glances all about him, and poised his body, like a panther, to leap upon his prey, when suddenly the old magician waved his hand, and the robber fell to the ground as though stricken by death.

"Dost thou behold, Pierre?"

"I do," answered the lad.

"Is it not a wonderful secret that I am about to impart to thee?"

"It is indeed."

"Knowing it, thou canst go through the world without fear. See how helpless that miserable devil is, and I have not laid a finger on him. I have but projected the fatal force over and around him. And thou shalt have the secret."

The old magician removed the spell under which he had paralyzed the robber, and the fellow lay quivering in fear and terror; and then the old man addressed him in a language that Pierre did not understand; but he could read the expression of terror upon the robber's face, and saw him arise and sneak away without a word while still quaking with terror and affright.

"Now we will continue our journey," said the old magician.

"But you said the man was not alone. He will summon his companions, and they may beset us in a body."

"You need have no fear. They will make away from us with all speed. And now I will tell thee about these fellows, and thou wilt know how to deal with them should they ever assail thee. I have encountered them before; but then I did not possess the power I now possess."

As the old magician and Pierre proceeded on their way toward the town, the former told the lad about the customs of the Phasigars. He said:

"The Phasigars are taught from infancy to look upon murder and plunder as their lawful occupations. They are gradually inured to scenes of bloodshed, and taught to believe that their destiny has forced upon them the avocation they are to follow. All Phasigars bring up their children to their own profession, unless prevented from pursuing it from constitutional weakness, or from some other bodily defect. A boy of ten years is first permitted to accompany a party of Phasigars upon an expedition of plunder, thus becoming gradually inured to sights of cruelty and relentless torture. He is placed under regular instructors, sometimes his own father becoming his guide and mentor, and in time he becomes proficient in the profession, and is turned loose, as it were, a licensed man-slayer. The most odious trait in the character of the Phasigars is that they often strangle their victims for the mere love of being cruel."

"They are a terrible tribe," remarked Pierre.

"Indeed they are, my son."

"You said you had encountered them before?"

"More than once; but upon one occasion I just escaped becoming a victim. Their methods are very ingenious, and they will follow a victim for days, even weeks, until a favorable opportunity offers itself for the carrying out of their deadly plans."

"Please tell me the story of your escape."

"Yes. But first let me tell you that, among other methods, they sometimes select a handsome girl and place her in a convenient spot where, by her beauty or a well-feigned story of distress, she may interest some unsuspecting traveler whom in the end she almost always betrays to destruction. Should he be on horseback, she will induce him to take her up behind him, after which, when the opportunity offers, she throws a noose over his head, leaps from the horse, drags him to the ground and strangles him."

"When I was a young man, I was once called to attend at the court of a prince who desired my services as an interpreter of dreams. I started out on horseback, and had traveled for several days, when one evening I saw a beautiful girl sitting beside the road. She sat with her head buried in her hands, was bent over, and appeared to be in great grief. I had often heard of the Phasigars, but I had never met with any of them during my journeys through the country. I was all unsuspecting when I drew up my horse and asked the handsome, weeping girl the occasion of her sorrow. I shall never forget the look of trouble upon her face as she glanced up at me and then again hid her beautiful face in her hands."

"Can I be of any service to you?" I asked.

"She looked up through her tears and said:

"Oh, sir, have you time to listen while I tell you my trouble?"

"I will listen until midnight, if necessary," I replied.

"The girl looked her gratitude, and commenced and told me a piteous tale. My heart was touched, and I said:

"What can I do for you?"

"In a plaintive voice she said:

"If you will let me ride behind you for a short distance you will do me the greatest service."

"This seemed but a slight request, and I consented. I was all unsuspecting of anything when I assented, and a moment later the girl was mounted behind me, and as we rode along she beguiled me with a weird tale of love and sorrow. Suddenly I felt something drop upon my nose. It slid down, and instinctively I grasped the object

with my teeth. Then the truth flashed upon me: I had been trapped by a female thug. She had cast a noose over my head while she held my attention with her weird tale; but fortunately I had caught the rope between my teeth. She slid from the horse and pulled at the line, intending to drag me from my horse and strangle me; but I was quick in resource. I plunged the spurs deep into my good steed's side, and he let fly his heels and struck the girl in the head. She fell and let go the rope, when I slipped it over my head and urged my horse forward. By a mere chance I had saved my life, for had the noose got round my neck I was a doomed man."

"It was a narrow escape," said Pierre, who had listened to the old magician's narrative with breathless interest.

In due time Pierre and the old magician reached the cavern, and they spent some hours together in conversation, when at length the lad returned to his home, after being admonished by the man to be sure to visit the cavern early on the following day.

CHAPTER IV.

BRIGHT and early the next morning Pierre was on hand, and he found the old magician in a grave mood.

"It is well that I decided to open up to you all my secrets," he said. "Listen, boy: I have received a warning. I am likely to be called away at any moment; but first I will conduct thee to my treasure vault and show thee the riches which are to be thine and Emily's. Thou hast never been behind this screen?"

"Never."

"I give thee credit that thou hast never importuned me to be allowed to go there; but to-day thou shalt see what I have long kept concealed."

The old man led Pierre behind the tiger-skin screen, and then, for the first time, he learned that it covered the entrance to an inner lateral cavern. He was led through to a remote corner of the chamber, where a stone was removed and a narrow opening disclosed. Through the opening the old man crawled, and bid Pierre follow. The lad obeyed, and was led through many passages; and as they proceeded the old man admonished the youth to take particular notice of the circular windings of the cavern, as he must become thoroughly familiar with its winding paths.

How far Pierre was led he did not know; but he came to the conclusion that, if left alone, he could never find his way back to the outer cave.

"I will have to come here many times," said the lad, "if I am ever to learn how to go and come at will."

"Yes; and thou shalt have much practice, for thou must learn to go and come at will."

At length the old man led the lad into a small cavern and showed him great treasure; and then he said:

"It will take thee a long time to remove this treasure, my son, because thou must be secret in doing it; but it must be taken away, and in good time transported to either England or America. The case of jewels thou must also watch and guard with great care until such time as thou leavest India. And mark well my words: when thou dost once go hence, never return. Make thy home among thine own people. I have good reason for instructing thee thus, for there is one other person besides you and I who knows of the secret of this cavern, and who will eventually learn that a third person has knowledge of it. So thou wilt heed well what I bid thee?"

"I will."

Several days passed, and during that time the old magician instructed Pierre in the mystery of the many passages leading to the treasure cave, and the lad had acquired a thorough knowledge of its circuitous windings; and finally, at the request of the old man, made a journey through them alone. He went and returned without any difficulty. And so several weeks passed, each day the lad receiving lessons in the wonderful force the old magician had discovered, and one day he said to the lad:

"Now shalt thou demonstrate if thou hast acquired the power."

"Shall I make the test on you?"

"Yes."

Pierre tried the force, and the old magician stood paralyzed and motionless. A moment only he held his old friend under the spell.

"Well done!" cried the old man when the power of speech returned. "Thou art indeed an apt scholar, and thou couldst hold a lion as helpless as thou didst me."

During the weeks that had passed the old magician had also told Pierre many facts concerning himself and Emily Thorne—she who was to share with Pierre the great wealth of the treasure cave, should he succeed discovering her.

Thus another week passed; when one morning Pierre, on entering the cave, was not greeted by the cheery words with which the old man usually welcomed him, for he was nowhere to be seen.

The old magician had not referred to the question of his approaching death for several days past. The day previous he had been particularly bright and cheerful; so the lad tried to cast from his mind the suspicion that had found lodgment there when he found the old man absent from the cave.

The youth decided to sit down and wait awhile. Perhaps he had gone into the secret cavern, and would make his appearance in a short time. But an hour passed and he came not.

Then the youth made a noise, intended as warning of his presence; but still there came no response. At length he muttered:

"I must know the truth."

A moment he hesitated, and then stepped behind the screen of tiger-skins. He was not there, and he advanced still further into the secret cavern; but nothing was to be seen of the old man anywhere.

"It is possible he has gone forth from the cave," he muttered.

He waited a few moments, and then remembered the power he possessed, and by a process the old magician had taught him he

caused the rock-chamber to be illuminated. He cast furtive glances about the chamber, and presently a disconcerting sight met his view. In a far corner, sitting bolt upright with his head pillowed on a lion's skin, was his good old friend.

Pierre approached the old man, thinking that possibly he might be asleep; but one glance was enough. The body was cold and rigid—yes, rigid in death; and in his hand he grasped a roll of paper. The youth took the roll from the lifeless hand and glanced at it, and saw that it was addressed to himself. He placed the paper in his pocket, and later on he proceeded to his home and informed his father of the old magician's death.

After the old magician had been buried, Pierre visited the cave every day; in fact, he spent most of his time there rehearsing and perfecting himself in the wonderful art the old man had imparted to him. But he did not reveal his power to any one or in any way betray the fact that he was at that moment the most accomplished magician in all India, the home of magicians.

One day, several months after the old magician's death, Pierre and his father were sitting alone on the veranda of their home, when suddenly the father said:

"My boy, I presume you know that you are not my real son?"

"I know it; but I love you as well as though you were really my father."

"I doubt not the fact, my lad; but I've something to say to you."

"I am all attention, sir."

"I promised that some day I would reveal to you who your real parents were; but, alas, I can not make good my promise!"

Pierre made no answer, and his father continued:

"You were brought to me by that old magician. He promised some day to tell your history. Possibly he intended to do so; but he kept putting off the revelation; and now, as you know, his lips are sealed in death, and the facts of your parentage will always remain unknown, as I do not believe any other person knows the secret."

Still Pierre made no answer.

His father looked at him curiously for an instant, and then asked:

"Did the old magician make any revelations to you?"

"He did."

"What did he tell you?"

"He told me I was the son of American parents. He said that my father and mother, who were missionaries, had been massacred during an uprising of the natives, and that he had rescued me and placed me in your keeping, because he knew you to be a good man."

"Is that all he told you?"

"Yes."

"Well, there is some satisfaction in knowing as much as that; but, after all, it makes little difference."

Pierre had told all he knew so far as concerned himself. The old magician had given him a manuscript in which, he knew, all the facts were recorded; but he had laid an injunction upon the youth not to read the manuscript until after the death of his father.

A month passed, and there came a second surprise and sorrow to Pierre, which led to his starting out upon the series of marvelous adventures which will be recorded as our story progresses.

Monsieur Bindalais was a very old man. One day Pierre, on returning from a long ride, saw his father seated in his big chair on the porch, enjoying his customary nap, as the youth supposed. He drove on to the stable and put the horse away, then returned to his father, who seemed to be still peacefully sleeping. The shades of evening had now begun to fall, and the youth muttered:

"Father appears to be sleeping much longer to-day than usual, I will rouse him."

He went to the chair and laying his hand on his father's shoulder gently shook him; but the old gentleman slept on. Then Pierre seized his hand. It was cold! The youth looked into the dear old gentleman's eyes, and the truth flashed upon him. Alas, he did sleep, and would sleep on until the sound of the last trump, for the light had faded from those eyes forever!

Pierre summoned help, and the old gentleman was tenderly carried into the house and laid upon a bed. A few days later good old Monsieur Bindalais was laid in his last resting-place, and Pierre's sorrow was well-nigh inconsolable.

It was not known that the old Frenchman had any living relatives, and when his will was read it was found that our hero had become heir to all the great wealth of his adopted parent.

Pierre was now alone in the world; he had no relatives that he knew. He was rich, and when he reached his majority he would possess wealth far beyond the dreams of his imagination. His father had appointed men of tested character to administer the estate, and when Pierre was one-and-twenty he would enter upon full control of it.

Pierre meditated long upon his future course, and finally decided to travel until he became a man and could claim his own.

We will not enter into full details, but merely say that our hero spent a few months in carrying out a certain scheme which involved the removal of the treasure from the secret cavern where the old magician had concealed it for so many years. He made other arrangements, and then, fully equipping himself, he determined to make a tour of the many provinces of India on horseback.

Pierre was a brave youth, strong and athletic, spoke several languages, and was learned in certain mysteries which gave him a power which had probably never before been within the grasp of one individual. His guardian fully approved of the lad's plans, as far as he had made them known, and it was with a light and brave heart that he set forth.

Our hero had traveled for a number of days, when one evening as he was riding through a wild waste of country, and rather regretting the fact that he had met with no adventure, he became involved in a very exciting encounter.

He had been on the road all day, and he determined to halt for a time and rest himself and his good steed. The latter was tethered

with rope, allowing him to wander around and feed upon the grass at will. Our hero lay down to rest. It was late in the afternoon, and he had been reclining for some time, when he beheld a female with covered face approaching him.

"Aha!" he muttered. "Some excitement at last!"

From the motions of the woman he recognized that she was young, and she was warbling a weird chant. She did not appear to notice the stranger until she was quite near him, and then she gave a start, stopped an instant, and then again moved on, and our hero muttered:

"This is some sort of a trick. Well, we shall see."

The girl passed on a short distance, and then turned and very slowly reapproached the spot where our hero reclined. When directly opposite him, she stood a moment and appeared to be contemplating him. Addressing the veiled woman in her native tongue, Pierre said:

"Would you speak to me?"

"Can I come close and look upon your face?"

"Yes."

Our hero was ready for whatever scheme the woman might attempt—for he was sure she was up to some scheme. He had drawn a knife, and was prepared to cut a noose should she attempt to throw one over his head.

The girl drew quite close to Pierre, and from under her veil closely scrutinized his features, and at length she said:

"You are an Englishman?"

"Yes," answered Pierre.

He thought he might as well say he was an Englishman, as she would not have recognized the distinction had he said he was an American.

"Oh, sir, can I tell you my trouble?"

"Yes; on one condition."

"What is the condition?"

"You have studied my face; I should like to see yours."

"I will let you see my face."

The girl raised her veil and disclosed a really handsome face. Pierre remembered what the old magician had told him—how the Phasigars employed beautiful girls to lure their victims.

"I am in great distress," said the girl.

Pierre smiled disdainfully and said:

"If you wish to tell me your story I am ready to hear it."

"It is a very long narrative. I may tire your patience."

"Not if the narrative is an interesting one."

"It is surely interesting; in fact, it is of tragic interest."

"I am at your service; proceed."

"But there has come a change over your face," said the girl.

"How so?"

"The pleasant smile has disappeared from it, and you now look stern and cold."

"You may mistake a look of interest for one of sternness."

"No; the expression of your face indicates suspicion."

"You read my face correctly: I am suspicious. But you may disarm my suspicion, and I may become your friend and do you a service."

"It is a countryman of your own who needs your services."

"Well, explain yourself."

"Your services are needed by a young Englishman who is doomed to death."

"Ah, I see it all!" was the mental conclusion of Pierre. "She means to tell me some tale that will let her lead me into the midst of some ambushed gang of thieves. But I am prepared: it is just such an adventure that I seek. I will encourage her to proceed."

"You say a young Englishman is doomed to death?"

"Yes."

"Who has doomed him?"

"A robber chief."

"That is a strange statement."

"It is true."

"And how are you interested?"

"I am on my way to bring assistance; but the road is long, and I am afraid he will be dead ere I can carry the news and get assistance, unless you will permit me to ride with you."

"The vixen!" thought Pierre. "It is the old game, sure enough! Well, I am forewarned and forearmed. She shall seem to triumph, and I will unmask her at the last moment."

"You were to tell me a tale?" he said.

"Yes."

"Proceed with it."

"You may not believe my story."

"I can judge of that later on."

"If I do not win your friendship I will only be losing time; but it is true that one of your people is in peril. Within three days he dies a horrible death, unless we obtain help."

"Tell me your tale, and then I will decide what I shall do."

The girl proceeded and told a weird story.

CHAPTER V.

THE story the girl related to Pierre was in substance as follows:

A certain Guclse priest, named Jimsajee Merjee, had got into bad odor with his tribe because of his licentious conduct and neglect of the duties of his office as custodian of the sacred fires, having allowed them to become extinguished, and he was expelled from the community to which he belonged. Provoked at his degradation, he fled to Calcutta with his only child—a daughter—and took up his abode among the ruins of old Delhi.

The Parsee, believing that he had been wronged, determined to throw off all respect for the law and devote himself to revenge and war upon society. He did not communicate his intentions to his daughter—a beautiful girl of sixteen—but, on arriving at the place

he had fixed upon for his future home, he set about preparations for carrying out his wicked plans.

In setting out for their lonely home he had as his sole property two bullocks. The latter were driven by the Parsee, and thus they proceeded until finally they halted in front of a tomb—a deserted sepulcher—which had long been moldering to decay.

Upon reaching this place, the Parsee entered in order to learn if it might be converted into a comfortable dwelling, his daughter meantime remaining outside with the bullocks. The passage was of some length and encumbered with rubbish. He proceeded slowly, however, until finally his progress was arrested by an unexpected impediment.

Having reached the end of the entrance passage, terminated by two alleys branching off circularly to the right and left, he was about to enter the one at the right, when suddenly he found his neck encircled by something which gradually increased its tension until he felt the pangs of suffocation. His arms were pinioned to his side so that he could not move them, and this was accompanied by such a frightful constriction that he began to imagine that the unquiet spirit of some great criminal had assaulted him for invading the solemn depository of the dead.

He heard no sound; but this, no doubt, his loud gaspings for breath would have prevented. At length such was his agony that, uttering a loud cry of distress, and at the same time exerting all his strength, he pressed forward, and reaching a door-way, entered a large octagonal chamber lighted by several apertures in the roof, when, overcome by terror and bodily pain, he fell upon the pavement.

The consciousness of his guilt now, for the first time, rushed upon his heart, filling it with a thousand vague terrors. The visitation of the Omnipotent had, as he thought, fallen upon him. He fancied himself doomed to a death as mysterious as it was dreadful; and though he struggled with all his might, his efforts were unavailing, and he gave himself up for a lost man.

Meantime his daughter, hearing a sharp, piercing cry, rushed into the passage. She had been unloading the bullocks, and as some of the packages were bound with strong cords, she was compelled to cut them. A large knife was, therefore, in her hand when she entered the passage.

The darkness embarrassed her for a moment; but, guided by the loud breathing of one whom her quick ear satisfied her was in peril, she leaped fearlessly over the rubbish. Arriving at the termination of the passage, she was guided by the sound of her father's gasps to the apartment in which he was lying. When she entered, the immediate change from almost total darkness to light, which fell directly upon the object of her search, prevented her for an instant from ascertaining the danger to which he was exposed. Her father was unable to speak, and only answered her questions by guttural gasps which sounded like the agony of strangulation.

In an instant, however, the instinct of filial affection suggested to her the extent of her parent's danger, and she flew to the side of the prostrate man. At once the mystery was solved. A large reptile was coiled around him, with its head opposite her father's face, and gradually tightening its coils to crush him to death.

The daughter, roused to an unwonted spirit of energy by her father's peril, raised the knife which she held in her hand and, striking with all her force upon the monster's body, severed its spine. The snake instantly uncoiled from its victim and writhed in agonized contortions about the apartment. Fearing that it might renew the attack, the Parsee, after recovering his breath, took the knife from his daughter's hand and attacking the reptile, speedily dispatched it.

It proved to be a young boa-constrictor, eighteen feet long—a fortunate circumstance for Jimsajee Merjee, for had it been full-grown it would certainly have destroyed him.

As soon as he had killed the boa, the Parsee kindled a fire in the principal apartment of the ruins and, lighting a torch, proceeded to examine the many recesses in order to clear them of any unwelcome occupants, to which time and neglect had given them undisturbed possession. Having cleared the place of all intruders, he finally selected it as his abiding place, feeling safe and at home.

On the following day the Parsee drove his bullocks to the nearest town and disposed of them for several rupees, and returned to the tomb in the ruins. Here he dwelt for some time with his daughter in perfect security, and after awhile they were joined by three other Parsees, who had been likewise degraded by their community for crime, and were glad to find a place where they could hide themselves from their fellows.

They were all men of reckless daring—as is generally the case with men upon whom society has fixed the brand of ostracism. Among these men, without characters, and alike indifferent to the opinion of their tribe and the consequences of their misdeeds, the lovely daughter of Jimsajee lived intact, like a jewel, the brightness of which is beyond description, no matter what the incrustations may be.

Ninjee was a beautiful girl, as we have said, one of those rare creatures who sometimes exist even in the most unwholesome surroundings. She certainly felt the degradation of her parent, and the light of hope had gone out from her heart; but she calmly acquiesced in whatever line of conduct her parent might think it fit to pursue without presuming to question its propriety. She had been taught from infancy to consider absolute obedience as an imperative obligation.

Not long after being joined by the three desperadoes of his own tribe, there followed certain indications of a lawless course of life which did not tend to render the tomb either a desirable or happy home for the daughter of Jimsajee Merjee. It was soon evident to her that her father had become a professional freebooter, and her heart was almost broken when contemplating the degradation and sin to which a priest of the ancient religion of the Fire-Worshippers had fallen.

She frequently became witness to scenes that caused her instinct-

ively to loathe her surroundings. But she uttered not a word of complaint, so enduring is the tie which in India binds the child to its parents.

Time passed on, and the fact became fully established to the daughter that her father had become a common desert robber, and was amassing considerable treasure as a result of his depredations, and the name of Jimsajee Merjee became famous as the chief of a notorious gang of bandits.

He was very careful, however, to make distant provinces the scenes of his depredations, and consequently he went on in his career and believed himself absolutely secure against all chance of discovery. He frequently absented himself with his companions weeks at a time, leaving his fair daughter in charge of the wife of one of his band—the only one who retained his wife as a companion.

On one occasion Jimsajee nearly lost his life. The party of which he was the leader had committed a robbery in the territory of Nepal, a wealthy gentleman being the victim, whose money and valuables they had secured; afterward separating to obviate the risk of detection.

Meanwhile, Jimsajee, who had not quitted the spot, observed two horsemen making toward him at full speed. The party were well armed and accompanied by the man who had been robbed. The Parsee saw that his only chance lay in immediate flight. He rode a small Arabian steed of great strength and fleetness, upon which he knew he could rely. It was a critical moment. The horsemen were fast approaching. He dug his spurs into the flanks of his steed, which bounded off like an antelope. Every object lost all definite outline to the eye of the rider as he madly dashed over the desert, and finally he urged the hardy little horse up a steep ascent, which the fleet animal climbed with a speed that was leaving the pursuers far behind.

But the pursuing horsemen stuck to the trail with unabated perseverance. The mettled Arab bounded up the steep ascent, panting and straining; but it was evident that such exertions could not continue much longer, as the Parsee was a heavy man. Moreover, the horses of his pursuers, being much stouter and their riders lighter, the probabilities of final escape lessened every moment.

At length his steed began to fail and his pursuers gained rapidly upon him, and his capture seemed inevitable in consequence of the Arab's stumbling upon a fallen tree and throwing Jimsajee violently to the ground.

For an instant the man was stunned; but recovering, he remounted the jaded little animal with remarkable agility and urged him on toward the brink of a precipice.

The armed horsemen were now close upon him. He heard the pant of the snorting steeds, so close were they. Looking behind, he perceived that he had not a moment to lose, and, with that desperation which accepts the slightest chance for life, he spurred his faithful animal toward the ravine. With one mighty bound it sprang forward and plunged down the ravine with a spring that carried it several yards beyond the brink.

One of the pursuers was close behind Jimsajee, and not being aware of the precipice until it was too late to check his horse, it likewise leaped over the brink.

Jimsajee's horse had taken so tremendous a spring as to clear every projection of the precipice, and pitched upon the thick undergrowth which grew densely in the ravine below. This broke its fall, and saved the life of its rider, though the horse was killed, and Jimsajee escaped with a broken arm and leg. But the other horseman was not so fortunate. The struggle which his horse had made before taking the fatal plunge prevented it from springing beyond the jagged surface of the mountain, and it had struck upon a projecting point of rock, and horse and rider were crushed to death.

Jimsajee lay for a long time helpless, and in the agony of his sufferings groaned continuously. A poor Pariah, passing along the verge of the cliff, heard the groans, and stopped and listened. At length, deeming that some mortal was in distress, he descended to the bottom of the ravine, and found the suffering robber chief.

The Pariah, although a despised outcast who dwelt in solitude apart from his race, was not bereft of human sympathies. He carried the injured man to his hut, and attended him faithfully until he was fully restored to health.

Jimsajee was not unmindful of the man's kindness, and rewarded him generously; and in due time he once again reached his home in the deserted tomb.

CHAPTER VI.

NINJEE, the robber's daughter, had mourned her father as dead, and when he returned her joy was great; for, woman-like, she considered not the fact that he was a robber. She remembered alone that he was her father, whom she loved.

We will here state that it was a long tale to which Pierre Bindalais was listening, and he was deeply interested in it; but the beautiful girl had become somewhat fatigued, and she changed her seat and requested Pierre to get her a drink of water. After a few moments she appeared to be considerably refreshed and proceeded with her narrative, which was in substance as follows:

Jimsajee Merjee, as we have said, became famous as a robber chief, although his depredations were committed far from his home. He found it necessary in time to change his residence, and he did so. His new abode was a small masoleum between two larger ones, the beautiful domes of which rose grandly from a flat roof that covered the whole space occupied by the building. The walls were surmounted by delicate minarets, which formed a marked contrast to the general solidity of the structure. The robber chief had selected the smaller edifice as less likely to attract observation, there being nothing in its external appearance to invite the scrutiny of the inquisitive traveler.

Ninjee acquiesced in her father's plans without protest. It was her father she loved and respected, not the robber chief. But there

came a time when new hopes and aspirations were aroused in her heart.

The beautiful daughter of the robber chief was one day returning from the river with her brass pitcher upon her head, when she was pursued by an infuriated buffalo. She saw no way to escape the mad beast, so she turned and calmly awaited its approach. She looked upon the threatened destruction of herself with calm self-possession; nor did she for one moment flinch as the peril approached. When the buffalo was within a few yards of her, a youth suddenly sprang past the beautiful girl from behind and stood before her maddened enemy. The excited animal instantly plunged toward him; but he adroitly avoided the intended impact by a quick spring to one side. The buffalo, not to be foiled, turned shortly upon him, and when it was just in the act of raising him upon its horns, the youth made a desperate leap forward, landing upon the animal's back, and, with the quickness of thought, taking a second spring, alighted on the ground upon his feet. He then quickly seized the buffalo by the tail and began to twist it, to the terror of the enraged brute, which, after turning around in two or three unavailing attempts to reach its tormentor, darted forward across the plain and was quickly out of sight.

During the exciting scene described, the girl had stood a silent witness. She well knew the peril of her rescuer, and she recognized the skill and daring with which he had baffled the enraged brute.

A buffalo may be a comparatively harmless animal ordinarily, but when maddened few animals can be more vicious.

When the struggle was over, however, Ninjee's emotions overcame her, and she fell to the ground in a dead faint. But the youth who had so bravely encountered the buffalo was equal to the fresh demand, and running to her pitcher, which had fallen from her grasp, he found sufficient water in it to bathe her brow, and she quickly revived. She was greatly abashed and distressed to find herself in the arms of a stranger, and he a handsome European—one of a race with whom she had never yet come in contact.

Poor girl! She felt dreadfully embarrassed. Her rescuer, seeing her uneasiness and being aware of the unconquerable reluctance of a Parsee woman to have any intercourse with persons not members of her own tribe, retired from her immediate vicinity. She was evidently touched by the subdued courtesy of his manner, and while she thanked him in the most ardent tones for his generous interposition in her behalf, she betrayed an extreme nervousness that caused the youth to feel great pity for her.

Having expressed her thankfulness, the girl secured her pitcher and returned to the river for a fresh supply of water, and upon her return she beheld the young Englishman still standing where she had left him. She went near to him, and saw a look of tender solicitude upon his handsome face. She was deeply touched, but did not dare address him; but she did bend her head in acknowledgment and recognition, and passed on.

The youth had hoped she would invite him to accompany her; and yet he should have known, had he considered, that it was not likely that she would do so. But he was so captivated by her beauty and manner that he resolved to gain through boldness that which he felt delicacy had prevented being tendered to him, and he followed her to the sepulchral habitation of the robber chief.

Jimsajee was seated without his habitation as his daughter approached, and he beheld the Englishman following her. He also observed that his daughter was greatly perturbed. He had his weapons with him, and, with anger settled upon his brow, he advanced, determined to avenge upon the spot any insult that might possibly have been offered to his child, and drawing near, he demanded, as his daughter came to a halt:

"Why is that man following you? Has he dared insult my child?"

"No, father; you owe your child's life to that brave man."

"What do you mean?"

The daughter related the incident, and dwelt upon the courage and gallantry of the youth who had rescued her from a great peril. The father listened with deep attention, and when the story was concluded he said:

"My child, I can but offer your rescuer my thanks and the hospitality of our home."

The girl did not speak, but there came a blush to her beautiful face. She remembered that her father was a robber chief, and although she would, under other circumstances, have been delighted to have had the handsome stranger remain at their home for a time, she hoped that he would decline the proffered hospitality and go his way.

Jimsajee approached the youth, who had remained at a respectful distance, and said, as he extended his hand:

"Stranger, I owe thee much for thy bravery in rescuing my child, and it will give me pleasure if thou wilt make my poor home thy abiding place until such time as thou shalt think it best to proceed on thy way."

Little dreaming of the tragic results that were to follow, the young man gladly accepted the invitation.

The young Englishman was led into the tomb and into a chamber to which the robber's child had never been allowed access, and here the guest was entertained with rich wines; and when both were exhilarated, Jimsajee demanded that his guest should tell something about himself, and he proceeded to do so.

The young Englishman's story was briefly told. He had been dismissed from the British army for having challenged a superior officer to a duel on account of a personal matter, and he had left the neighborhood in order to seek employment in the Mahratta service, being determined not to depart from India a disgraced man. He had traveled from Cawnpore to Delhi without anything but the clothes on his back and a purse containing five hundred rupees.

The robber chief was greatly interested in the young Englishman's narrative. The similarity between the young man's position and his own, in one respect, kindled a sympathy in the heart of the

robber chief, and he pressed his guest to remain with him for at least a time, assuring him that he would be safe from arrest should the British authorities attempt to follow him.

The young man was not at all averse to the acceptance of the invitation. He was of an adventurous turn of mind; and, besides, he was charmed by the Parsee's daughter; therefore he gladly announced his determination to accept the robber chief's hospitality.

There happened to be a compartment in the tomb of which no use was made, and in it the young Englishman took up his abode.

Probably never before had a European been permitted to dwell under the same roof with a Parsee; but Jimsajee had practically repudiated the usages and prejudices of his people.

The young Englishman did not for a moment suspect the true character of his host. Harry Blankway had been well reared, and, although careless and reckless, he was not vicious or depraved; and he was a young man possessed of a high sense of honor. The incident that had led to his dismissal from the army, while a grave offense according to the army code, did not reflect upon his reputation for general integrity.

Jimsajee had not been on any predatory excursions since his almost fatal plunge over the precipice, and there was nothing to suggest his real occupation. Of course, Harry thought it singular that his host had selected such weird quarters for a home; but he never suspected the true cause; and, as time sped by, he seemed to have forgotten his intention of offering his services to the Mahrattas.

At length the robber chief began to absent himself from his sepulchral home. He had resumed his predatory excursions; and thus the young Englishman had occasional opportunities for seeing and conversing with the lovely girl whose life he had saved.

At first she manifested a suppressed repugnance to meeting him; but by degrees this abated, and after awhile she met him more frequently and without embarrassment. The woman who was her only female companion since her parent's banishment from the home of his ancestors was not a person whom she could either confide in or respect. It was therefore a relief to her sometimes to converse with one who seemed to sympathize with her in her solitude, and to her the young man's society was more than a common gratification.

The consciousness of being appreciated was a feeling to which she had hitherto been unaccustomed. It opened a new world to her unsophisticated view. She knew that she was beginning to take more interest in life. There was less gloom and more that was bright and cheerful.

Time sped on, and as the robber chief remained away most of the time, there grew up a friendship between the Parsee's daughter and the young Englishman that eventually overcame all prejudices; and although the words were unspoken, both knew that they loved, indeed if not wisely, at least too well.

She loved as only a woman can love who has lived a life of solitary thoughtfulness and contemplation; and there were attractions about the reckless young soldier that would have won the heart of a girl more worldly wise than the lovely daughter of the robber chief.

Meantime, the tender feeling was not confined to the Parsee's daughter alone. Harry Blankway was as surely in love with her. He saw in this maiden, whose mind had been darkened by the absurdities of a Sabian creed, such a clear central light of moral purity amid the spiritual darkness, that he was compelled to love her as a woman of rare qualities which had been checked in their development by her environment.

All these things he considered. He sought to reason coldly and calmly; but who can reason calmly when the fires of a raging love is in one's heart? Harry felt that he could not, and he thrust all reasoning aside and loved on, regardless of consequences.

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY looked upon the Parsee's daughter with that sort of thrilling commiseration which invariably draws the heart closer to the object of its affection; and, in the romantic ardor of his passion, its fervent sophistry rising as the sober dictates of truth, he persuaded himself that he was really influenced by a holy impulse to snatch her from the moral corruption to which she was perpetually exposed and place her in a more elevated position.

He was young, strong and brave, and he believed it was his duty to ameliorate the condition of this flower of the desert.

As time passed on, Harry made good use of his opportunities. He had won the fair girl's heart, and he now desired to change her faith, and was forgetful of what the consequences might be. He came of a good English family, and he knew they would be outraged by his mad love for the daughter of a Parsee; but he stopped not to consider. He only built his hope upon connecting the object of his passion to his own faith; and, despite the prejudices of long training and all the traditions of her race, he succeeded. Then he proposed marriage to her and was accepted.

The lonely, neglected girl, with her change of faith, gave up her heart, and consented to do in all things as her lover wished.

While the robber chief was away on one of his predatory excursions, Harry persuaded Ninjee to accompany him to a mission station, and there she became his wife, according to the solemn rites of the Christian church. There was no attempt at deceit on his part. It never entered his mind to take advantage of the love he had won; and she became his wife, after having been baptized and confirmed, according to the ritual of the Episcopal church, under the name of Martha.

And so time passed on. The young bride did not tell her father that she had abjured the faith, which he had also renounced, and become the wife of an Englishman.

At length an incident occurred which made longer secrecy impossible, and she confessed to her father all the facts.

Jimsajee was wild with rage. In his fury he struck his daughter

to the earth. Then, his passion at white heat, he sought the husband, and reviled him with every vile name he could think of, and drove him from the tomb, only restrained from killing him on the spot because of a fiendish scheme of revenge that entered his mind; for he was cunning enough to know that in driving the young man forth he would in the end gain the opportunity he desired.

Jimsajee now held a consultation with his three confederates.

"That man must die!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; he must die!" they answered in unison.

"I have driven him forth."

"You did wrong," said one of the robbers. "You should have strangled him at once."

There came a grim smile to the robber chief's face as he said: "Strangle him? Nay; that were too comfortable a death!"

"But he will flee away," said one of the bandits. "Let us to horse and capture him ere he shall have escaped us."

"Never fear that he will run away," said Jimsajee. "He comes of a proud race, and will never forsake his bride. He will hover around until a chance presents itself to steal her away. We will let them appear to succeed, and then we will seize them, and her disobedience will seal her doom also."

"Will you put your child to death?"

"She shall know a father's just wrath."

The Parsee's cunning conjecture was verified. He allowed his daughter perfect freedom, but bid her not see her husband under penalty of death. But well he knew she would not heed his mandate.

Martha feared that her husband might seek to see her, might be even so bold as to come to the tomb and demand his bride, and she shivered as she thought what the consequences would be.

At length her father went away, and she went to seek her loved one. She did not have to search long. Harry was on the watch also. He had determined to reclaim his wife at all hazards. He was not a coward; he would have fought the robber chief; but alas, the man, after all, was the father of his wife!

Harry remained hidden in the vicinity of the tomb waiting an opportunity to steal his bride away, when he saw the Parsee pass by on his horse, and calculated that Martha would soon come forth to seek him; so he wandered close to the home of his lady's father. Soon he saw his bride come forth.

She advanced toward him, and he ran to meet her. She was trembling and in great distress. Harry clasped her in his arms and exclaimed:

"My beloved, you have come! I have waited for you, and now we will go away together."

"No, no!"

"Remember, I am your husband."

"I remember; but thy life and my life will pay the penalty."

"Fear nothing; I will protect you."

"No, no! Thou must flee away. I will be faithful to thee. In time my father will relent, and then thou shalt come and claim me."

"I claim you now."

"I can not go with thee."

"You shall fly with me, and when your father's wrath is appeased we will return to him."

"You do not know him. He would follow and kill us both."

"But we will hide from him."

"No; it would only lead to bloodshed should we attempt to elude him. 'Tis better we should wait. You flee, and I will appease my father, and then I will come and seek thee."

"You must go with me now, my beloved," said Harry. "I can not live without you."

And the next instant he was stricken prone to the earth.

The two young people had been so absorbed in each other that they did not notice the three dark figures that were stealing toward them; and the first intimation Martha had of their presence was when she beheld her husband lying senseless at her feet, while a fiendish laugh rang in her ears as one of her father's confederates bent over her and said:

"Aha! You will not obey your father's commands, eh?"

One of the men seized the girl, and she was bound with cords and taken away; and later on Harry was carried into one of the dark recesses of the gloomy tomb.

On the following day Jimsajee visited his daughter, who was also a prisoner. There was sternness in his eyes, and his dark face was set in anger as he entered his weeping daughter's presence. All love had vanished from his heart, or, rather, he sought to persuade himself that such was the fact. His anger was not so great because of his daughter's marriage to a Christian as because of her apostasy. He did not stop to think that he had violated the obligations of his religion; he only remembered that his child had abjured the faith of her ancestors.

Upon entering the presence of his daughter, Jimsajee stood before her with folded arms and a cold gleam in his eyes, and, after a few moments of silent contemplation, he said:

"My child, thou wast mad when thou didst abjure the faith of thine ancestors—thou wast mad with love for thine husband. He beguiled thee. Come, now, so confess, and I will forgive thee."

"Father, it is not so," Ninjee calmly answered.

"Be careful! Consider well before thou commit thyself. Tell me at once that thou wilt renounce this new faith and return to the faith of thy fathers."

"Never!"

"Again I say, child, be careful!"

"I have spoken."

"I could forgive thee for thy disobedience, but not for thy apostasy. And now, mark well my words: abjure this new faith, or thou diest."

"Not at thy command will I renounce the faith I have adopted." "Not only shalt thou die, but first thou shalt behold the dying agonies of thy husband."

"If he shall ask me to renounce my faith in order to save his life, I will obey. To save my own life, never!"
 "Thou hast well considered?"
 "I have."
 "I can again love thee, my child. I am thy father."
 "With my last breath I will pray for thee," came the answer.
 "I need not thy prayers. It is thy love and obedience I desire."
 "Thou dost but waste words. Should I pretend to renounce my faith I would only deceive thee. The new faith has entered my heart. I can not live without it, and I can die with it."
 "And thou shalt die, and thy husband shalt die with thee."
 "I would ask one favor, father."
 "Name it."
 "Let me speak with my husband."
 "Not until thou dost meet him to see him die."

Jimsajee left the presence of his child, and after a little consideration he determined to burn the lovers at the stake; and once having so resolved, he was inexorable.

Harry recovered from the effects of the blow he had received only to find himself bound hand and foot and a prisoner, and there came over him a premonition of some terrible fate. There was no way for him to communicate with the people of his own nation. He had purposely hidden from them. He had concealed his identity. He was a prisoner, at the mercy of a fierce and relentless fanatic, and he knew there was no hope for him unless his enemy should relax his determination of vengeance.

The young man lay bound and sore, and revolving many schemes in his mind, when he heard a voice, and, looking up through the dim light that shone through his dungeon, he beheld the outlines of a human figure. It was Jimsajee.

"I am here to speak with thee," said the robber chief.

The prisoner made no answer.

"I took thee into my home, made thee one of my household, trusted thee, and thou hast betrayed me."

"Can you call it a betrayal, when I made your daughter my honorable wife?"

"I heed not that. Thou hast made her an apostate to the faith of her fathers, and for that I curse thee; and for that, also, thou shalt die."

"Listen ere you pronounce judgment: I care not for myself, but for your daughter—my wife. I would not leave her in sad widowhood."

"Thou needst have no fear. She shall never be thy widow; she will die with thee."

For a moment Harry could not speak, and when he found voice he exclaimed:

"You would not murder your own child?"

"She is no longer my own child. It is not the parent who pronounces her doom; it is the law that dooms her to death. I am but the instrument."

"Kill me if you will; but spare you child!"

"She must die, and so must thou; and she shall witness thy death agonies first, and then she shall follow thee; and a father's curse will go down to the grave with you both."

CHAPTER VIII.

JIMSAJEE, although a backslider, was not an apostate from the faith of his ancestors, and when he learned of his daughter's apostasy there came to the wretch a cunning and fanatical suggestion. He felt that an opportunity had arisen for him to make some atonement for his own remissness, and he became fanatically earnest in his resolve to maintain the integrity of his faith.

After long thought, or, rather, after pretended meditation, he announced that his apostate daughter, and also he who had allured her from her faith, should die at the stake.

He started in to fast, and punished himself in the most shocking manner, in order to prepare himself for the holy duties—as he pretended to feel them to be—of executioner.

To the young Englishman he announced his resolve, and Harry begged and pleaded with him to spare his child.

"Execute me," he cried; "yes, burn me at the stake if you will; but spare your daughter!"

"No," replied the Parsee. "You die for tempting her; she dies for her weakness in being tempted."

We will here state that Harry had learned the true history of the robber chief. At the time he married Martha his suspicions had been aroused as to the true character of her father, and since then his suspicions had been confirmed. He discerned that the father intended sacrificing his daughter as a palliation for his own misdeeds.

"Listen to me," said Harry. "In my own country I am rich. All my wealth shall be transferred to you if you will but spare your child."

"It is useless to plead with me. My child dies, and you die with her."

Harry begged and pleaded; he even offered to join the robber chief's band, and in every way sought to soften the heart of the Parsee; but the latter remained firm.

Jimsajee took delight in describing the manner of death he had determined upon; and then, leaving his intended victim, he went to prepare for the execution.

Harry had asked for permission to exchange a few words with his wife; but the privilege had been refused. And so the preparations went on, and his heart throbbed within him in terrible throes of agony.

The foregoing is the substance of the strange tale that was related to Pierre Blodais by the veiled girl he had met while making his way across the plain. He had listened attentively, and had pretended to believe the weird tale, while, in fact, he had determined that

it was all a part of a scheme to allure him to some robber's den, there to be robbed and murdered.

"You say the young Englishman is still alive?" asked Pierre.

"Yes."

"How did you chance to learn all these facts?"

"I can not tell you the full particulars; but I had communication, through a third party, with the Englishman, and I have been sent for aid."

"Who employed you to seek aid for this man?"

"I can not tell you that."

"Why not?"

"I am bound by an oath not to reveal who I serve."

"And where were you going for aid?"

"I was seeking to make my way to nearest garrison."

"The nearest garrison is a long distance from here. Do you expect to procure assistance in time to save the life of the young Englishman and his bride?"

"Not unless you aid me."

"How can I assist you?"

"Remember, sir, that it is a countryman of your own who is in peril. You can let me mount behind you and then we can reach the garrison in time."

"When are the Englishman and his bride to die?"

"On the morrow at sunset."

"Do you know that it will take us five hours to reach the nearest garrison from here?"

"I do."

"How far is it from here to where the Englishman lies a prisoner?"

"On your steed we might reach the place in twenty hours."

"Then how can help arrive in time?"

"It is possible that the execution may be postponed."

"What reason have you to hope that it may be postponed?"

"Only that something may occur to prevent it."

"This is a very cunning tale you have related to me. But you will have to seek some other victim; you can not trick me."

The girl gazed with a startled look upon her face, and after a moment demanded:

"What is it you suspect?"

"Oh, I know your little game!"

"It is no game. What I have told you is the awful truth."

"Suppose I should tell you that I could rescue my countryman?"

"You could not do it alone."

"How do you know I couldn't?"

"I know how terrible a man is Jimsajee. Were you to go alone, there would be two English victims."

"I wish I could believe your tale," said Pierre.

"It is true, and I will prove it to thee."

"How will you prove it?"

The girl hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"I must first be satisfied that thou canst save him."

"I can prove it to you."

"Do so; then I will prove my story true."

"No, no; it is all a trick! Go your way; you can not make me a victim," said Pierre, laughing. "I have divined your intention."

"And what is my intention?"

"You would lead me to some robbers' den, there to have me robbed and murdered."

"Alas, and can I expect no aid from thee?"

"I can not trust you."

"Then I will go my way," said the girl, sorrowfully. "There is yet hope that I may save thy countryman."

"You have said that you could prove the truth of the tale you have related to me. Why not do so?"

"I will when thou hast convinced me that thou hast the power to defeat Jimsajee and his robber band single handed."

At that moment there came the terrible roar of a wild beast. The girl started, and then began to tremble like an aspen leaf; for the sound that had fallen upon their ears always causes the blood of the hearer to run cold, even the hunter who seeks his lair.

The girl crept close to our hero's side.

"Ah, that was the growl of a tiger!" he exclaimed.

"Yes. What shall we do?"

"It is no unusual thing for a tiger to be found here."

"No; we are but a few miles from the jungle, and once in a while a hungry tiger will take to the road."

"What do you think would be the best thing for us to do?" asked Pierre, calmly.

"Thou art armed," said the girl, looking into his face.

"But I may not be a certain shot."

"We have no time to spare. We will mount thy horse and speed away ere the beast scents our presence."

"Ah, he has scented our presence already, you may rest assured."

"It is not necessary that we should both die."

"Why, what would you do?"

"Mount thy horse and speed away, and I will remain and become the tiger's prey."

"And what will become of the Englishman and his wife?"

"I did my best to save them. I can do no more than sacrifice my life for them. But see! He comes!"

"Be not afraid," said Pierre; "I will remain with you. Yes, I will do more. Have not the slightest fear: I am a match for the tiger. I will prove to you that I can save my countryman, and then you shall prove to me the truth of your strange story."

The girl was amazed at the cool demeanor of Pierre as he spoke these confident words. There came an incredulous gleam in her eyes, and she even indulged the suspicion that she was talking to a madman; yet there was nothing to indicate that such was the case on the youth's handsome face.

At length another roar issued from the edge of the thicket and the mighty beast leaped into the open.

Instinctively the girl grasped the arm of the young man.

"Now, let go my arm and step behind me," said Pierre, with the calm confidence that commands obedience. "Keep perfectly cool, and I will show you how easy it is to subdue even a tiger. I will make him lie down and lick my hands."

The girl was now fully convinced that the youth was mad. Indeed, as the youth turned his head to caution her to keep a few feet back of him and in no case to hamper him in any way, she read madness in the preternatural light of his eyes.

Our readers will understand the latter incident when we declare that the strange light that flashed forth from Pierre's eyes was a manifestation of that strange power that had been revealed to him by the old magician.

"See!" exclaimed the girl. "The tiger approaches us!"

"Let him come!" whispered Pierre.

It was indeed true. The tiger was slowly creeping toward his prey, his great jaws flecked with foam, his eyes like blazing coals, his tail whipping the ground. At length the ferocious beast got within springing distance, and was steadying its lithe body for the fatal leap, when, with a few passes of his hands, Pierre said, in sharp, clear tones:

"Stand thou there!"

The youth spoke in a commanding tone, and there was a determination in the glance of his eye, and a coolness and firmness in his manner that proved he neither felt fear nor hesitation.

Meantime the tiger had halted. Pierre advanced, and the girl stood spellbound. There was something hypnotic in the very movements of the young man. She was fascinated—under a spell, as it were—and she stood motionless and watched.

As stated, the tiger had come to a halt; but, as Pierre advanced, he again prepared for a spring; and a then there followed a most remarkable performance.

The fierce brute became all motion and activity, and lunged forward and backward and pawed the earth, as though it would spring but had lost the necessary confidence to do so.

A weird suspicion flashed through the mind of the girl. It occurred to her excited mind that the youth was about to sacrifice himself to save her.

A moment later, however, she beheld, as stated, a most remarkable performance. The tiger, who appeared to be just ready to spring upon its prey, suddenly became motionless, its eyes lost their fire, and its quivering body became rigid.

Pierre stood for a moment with a smile upon his face; then he advanced toward the brute, who had become, as it were, absolutely petrified. He drew a knife and plunged it into the tiger's brain, and the huge animal rolled over and lay lifeless and bleeding upon the ground.

Pierre turned and beckoned the girl to approach; but she hesitated, and he said:

"Don't be afraid; the beast is perfectly harmless now."

Slowly the girl advanced.

"See!" said Pierre; "the beast is dead."

The girl gazed at him as though he were a young god that had suddenly appeared before her; and when he said, "Are you satisfied now that I can rescue the young Englishman and his bride?" she bowed her head in acquiescence.

"Now will you fulfill your promise, and prove to me that you were really sent to bring rescue to the lovers?"

"And will you save them?"

"I will when I have proof that you have told me a true tale."

"Will you tell me how you got the better of the tiger?"

"I can not explain to you whence comes the power that subdued the tiger. I can only tell you that the same power will be as potent in saving your friend."

"And you will go with me?"

"Yes; when fully satisfied that it is my duty to do so."

The girl drew a letter from her bosom and handed it to Pierre. The young man opened and read a missive addressed to the commandant of the garrison, and in the letter was a brief statement of the facts as they had been related to him by the girl.

"I will go with you," said Pierre.

"I trust we will be in time to save them," said the girl.

"We must hasten. Come and mount behind me and we will away."

"The night falls. I will go afoot and lead the way."

"That will not be necessary just yet; but if it should become necessary ere we reach the end of our journey for either of us to walk it shall be me."

The girl at length consented, and the horse, having had a long rest, started off at a fast pace.

The shades of night had now settled down, and it was very dark; but the horse continued at a lively gallop, notwithstanding the fact that their course lay through the jungle. Along toward midnight Pierre halted his steed to let him have a short rest, and while they waited he remarked:

"I trust we may be in time."

"I hope we will," said the girl.

"How many are there in the robber gang?"

"Jimsajee and his three companions."

"And one of these men is interested in the escape of the Englishman?"

"Yes; the one who sent me to the garrison."

"How does Jimsajee propose to put them to death?"

"He will burn them at the stake."

"A horrible death, surely! But if we can only reach there in time I tell you no such barbarous scene will be enacted."

"He is a terrible man."

"I care not how terrible he may be."

"He will stop at nothing to accomplish his design."

"He will stop when I come into his presence."

"And will you slay him as you did the tiger?"

"No; I will simply subdue him."

"That will indeed be a wonderful feat," said the girl, doubtfully. "You have already been a witness of the power I possess; but I shall show you an even more wonderful manifestation of it when we reach the abode of the bandits."

While Pierre, under the guidance of the girl, was hastening to the rescue, a scene of suffering and agony was going on in the tomb residence of the robber chief. Martha was resigned to her fate; but she, woman-like, pleaded for her husband.

"Let me die," she said to her father. "I may deserve death for my disobedience; but he is blameless; let him live."

There was no sign of relenting on the Parsee's stern face as he said:

"It is useless for thee to plead with me. Thou shalt behold thy husband's death agonies, and then thou shalt follow him."

A suspicion flashed through the devoted wife's mind, and she said:

"If he dies, I shall surely die."

The suspicion that had come to her was that her father might compel her to witness her husband's death agonies and then spare her life, making her punishment end in the infliction of a mental torture which would be a living death. That is why she said, "If he dies, I shall surely die."

The morning of the day when the sacrificial fires were to be kindled broke dull and heavy. The time appointed for the deed was at sunset; but alas, there was no sun visible! The sky became overcast, and, as the afternoon advanced, fitful gusts of wind announced the approach of a tempest. The thunder muttered, and there were occasional showers; and still the preparations for the awful sacrifice proceeded.

A quantity of dry wood had been conveyed into the tomb during the morning, and immediately behind the building a stout stake had been driven into the ground. It stood about five feet high, and was about as thick as a man's leg, and to this the victims were to be bound so that they might be consumed.

As has been indicated, Martha did not fear death. Indeed, she would have gone to the stake cheerfully, if by her death she could have atoned for her husband, and thereby have saved his life. But, alas, the truth was forced upon her mind that both were doomed!

CHAPTER IX.

HARRY BLANKWAY was not so resigned to his fate as his wife was, and he had thought over several methods of escape; but as time passed, and no opportunity could be discovered whereby he might successfully liberate his bride and fly with her to a place of refuge, hope died in his heart.

He knew how slight was the chance for his messenger to reach the garrison, and even if she did the chances were against the news of his perilous situation reaching it in time for the rescuers to make the journey to save his life.

At length the day dawned on which he was to die, and Jimsajee visited him early in the morning. There was a look of intense hatred in his eyes as he entered Harry's presence, and the latter said:

"You may think you are acting wisely, but you are making a great mistake. In accomplishing my death you are also sealing your own doom."

There came a bitter smile to the robber chief's face as he answered:

"Your threats are idle."

"You will learn that they are not idle threats before many days have passed over your inhuman head."

The answer was a savage growl.

"Oh, you may growl, like the wild beast you are, but ere many suns have set your growl will be changed to shrieks of piteous pleading."

"What meanest thou?"

"You have come to tell me that I die to-day, have you not?"

"Thou speakest correctly."

"And your own daughter is also to become a victim to you hateful fanaticism?"

"She dies also."

"I do not ask for my own life; I plead for the life of your child."

"As she hath pleaded for yours."

"And, monster as you are, you will not listen to either of us!"

"Nay; thy pleadings but fall on deaf ears."

"I am an Englishman, and I want to tell you that if you carry out the monstrous crime you contemplate our lives will be avenged, for already news of your intended butchery has been carried to the garrison."

There shot a fierce look into the Parsee's eyes for an instant; but as quickly it faded away, and he laughed and said:

"Thou canst not frighten me by any such declaration. No; thou wilt never be missed. I have arranged my plans too cunningly."

"You will learn differently."

"If I believed thy idle statement, thou wouldst die within the hour; but I do not believe thy empty boast, and I shall not change my plans. At sundown thou diest!"

Harry did not press the subject further. He feared that the wretch might do as he threatened; and there still remained a slight hope that their rescue might be effected.

The robber chief, after once more admonishing Harry of his impending doom, departed. As the truth seemed to settle in the young man's mind that there was no hope, his courage became stronger, and he became more resigned to his fate.

At length night drew near. Although the execution was to take place at sunset, the sun had refused to send forth its rays during the whole day, and a tempest raged and thunder reverberated across the heavens. So, as the time for sunset approached, Harry was led forth to die.

The young man was bound fast to the stake, and the executioners stood around waiting to behold his death struggle. Suddenly one

of the bandits approached, seemingly to tighten one of the cords—it was the fellow whom Harry had suborned—and he inquired, in a whisper:

"Did you faithfully send the message?"

"I did."

"Is there still time for the rescuers to reach here?"

"There is still hope."

"Do your best to delay the execution as long as possible."

"I will," said the man, as he stepped away.

A few moments later Martha was led forth. Jimsajee and the bandit who had dispatched the messenger to the garrison were now noticed to be engaged in what proved to be a long conversation in regard to some detail of the execution. The result of the talk was a change in the robber chief's plans, and he decided that his victims should die together. The young wife was now bound to the stake with her husband. She was calm and hopeful, and to her husband she whispered the one word:

"Courage!"

At that moment Harry's heart writhed within him; but he controlled his mad ragings and said:

"Oh, my darling, that I could but save thee!"

"I desire not to live without thee. If my father had spared my life and had killed thee I should have soon followed thee. I could not live without thee. We shall soon pass through this fiery ordeal and we shall be reunited in the better land. Let us be brave!"

The robber chief stood by, stern and resolute. There were no signs of relenting on his fierce face. He observed that his victims were speaking to each other, and he gave the order to apply the torch.

The fatal moment had arrived. The friendly bandit had done everything possible to delay the execution in the hope that aid from the garrison might reach them; but the rescuers had not arrived. All hope had fled from Harry's mind.

One of the bandits, in obedience to the order of Jimsajee, reached forth his hand to apply the lighted torch, when there came a clap of thunder, succeeded by flashes of vivid lightning. The man started back in affright, when a second peal of thunder shook the earth.

Again the robber chief, in stentorian tones, commanded the man to apply the torch. But the frightened fellow stood irresolute, and the robber chief sprang forward, seized the blazing fagot, and was about to apply it himself, when suddenly there appeared a young man upon the scene, who placed himself between the would-be executioner and his victims.

The amazed Parsee gazed in consternation.

"What are you about to do?" asked the stranger.

"And who art thou, and from whence dost thou come?"

"Murderer, drop that burning fagot!" came the command from the youth.

The robber chief at first concluded that it was an officer from the garrison who confronted him; but on looking him over he discovered that he was but a mere youth, some straggler probably who had wandered upon the scene, and Jimsajee exclaimed, as he drew a weapon from his belt:

"Stand aside, or thou diest in thy tracks!"

Pierre looked the robber chief in the eye for an instant, and then said:

"Fool, to draw your weapon! You are at my mercy!"

As our hero spoke he extended his hand, and the robber chief stood helpless and rigid before him.

Turning to the confederates, who stood gazing in mute astonishment, Pierre commanded:

"Cut the thongs which bind the victims to the stake and set them free!"

Neither of the fellows moved, when Pierre suddenly projected his hand toward one of them, and the man became as one paralyzed.

While still facing the two men whom he had thus strangely rendered helpless, he backed to where the victims were bound to the stake, and then suddenly turning, he whipped out a knife and cut the thongs which bound them, and, addressing Harry Blankway, he commanded:

"Take the girl away to a safe distance while I deal with these wretches. I will soon follow after you."

Harry Blankway had been as greatly amazed as the Parsees had been at the strange interference of this seeming youth, and the suspicion crossed his mind that his rescuer was some supernatural agent. Indeed, it seemed as though an angel had descended from heaven, in the form of a handsome youth, to save them from the fiery furnace. He did not stop to ask any questions, but clasping the hand of his bride he led her away.

After Harry and his wife had gone, Pierre turned to the two bandits upon whom he had not projected the electric force, and said:

"Down to the ground, wretches!"

The men obeyed. It had also come to them that the interposition was of supernatural force.

"And now, Jimsajee," demanded the youth, "what have you to say in palliation of the terrible crime you contemplated?"

The robber chief did not make an immediate reply. He, too, believed that the youth had dropped from the clouds; and he had good reason for his weird suspicion: for he knew that, by a motion of his hand, the stranger had robbed him of all power of motion, and by a second wave of the hand the youth had released him from the spell and once again his powers had returned.

"Come; answer!" commanded Pierre.

Still the robber chief remained silent, and Pierre said:

"If you do not answer me I will strike you dead in your tracks!"

As the youth spoke he began slowly to raise his hand, and the robber chief ejaculated:

"Have mercy!"

"Will you answer my question?"

"My daughter has become an apostate to her faith. She has de-

serted the religion of her fathers. I am a priest of the temple, and according to the law I am compelled to condemn my child to death."

"Is it the law of your religion that all apostates shall be put to death?"

"Yes."

"How about yourself, then? You confess yourself a priest, and yet you are worse than an apostate, for you have violated every tenet of your faith save an open renunciation of it. You are a criminal; yes, an assassin, a robber, and a hundred times have you merited death."

"Have mercy!" cried the robber chief.

"Ah, you now cry for mercy! Did you hear your daughter's cry for mercy?"

"I was but obeying the law."

"I know not what punishment the law of your religion ordains for such as you; but I do know that under the civil law you have forfeited your life, and I would be but doing my duty were I to execute you here and now. But I will spare you. Go hide your face; enter your abode, and remain there one whole month. If you should come forth within that time you shall surely die. Go!"

The Parsee stood irresolute for a moment. He was a determined man, and the idea came to him that, after all, he might be deceiving himself as to the power of the strange youth, and he demanded:

"By what power dost thou command me?"

The youth raised his hand, and Jimsajee once again became rigid, and his face showed the agony he experienced; and when again the youth moved his hand the spell departed.

"Would you like to learn more of my power?" asked Pierre.

"I will obey thee!" exclaimed the robber chief, in terror.

"Then go! And mark well my words: if you come forth within the month, you die!"

"But my child?"

"What about your child?"

"I would speak with her."

"You will never see your child again. You are a monster! She owes now her allegiance only to her husband. Go!"

Slowly the robber chief moved away, and Pierre followed him to the entrance of his abode, and then Jimsajee halted and asked:

"Wilt thou not permit me to speak to my child once more?"

"Could you speak to her again if she were now a heap of ashes, as you intended she should be?"

"I thought I was doing a sacred duty."

"And in the most cruel manner."

"It may be I was wrong. My heart was breaking when I condemned her to death."

"I can not believe you; but I will see your daughter, and if she desires to speak with you, I will relent and permit her to visit you; but it shall be your last meeting."

There shot a strange luster to the eyes of the Parsee, and Pierre exclaimed:

"Ah, I see! Revenge still glows in your heart."

"No; it is love. I desire to implore my child's forgiveness."

"Go! If your daughter desires to come to you, she may. But mark well my words: do her no harm!"

Jimsajee entered the tomb, and Pierre started to seek the rescued husband and wife.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY BLANKWAY and his wife had been discussing the remarkable incident of their escape, and were still in the midst of their exclamations of wonder and delight and thankfulness when they saw their rescuer approaching. Both began to express their gratitude to him for his intervention in their behalf, when Pierre bid them desist, saying:

"You owe your escape to the messenger whom you sent to the garrison."

"And are you from the garrison?" asked Harry.

"No; I met your messenger on the way. She told me about your terrible situation and I hastened to the rescue."

"And you came alone?"

"Yes."

"By what marvelous power did you render our persecutor helpless?" asked Harry.

"That is a secret I will not divulge at present. Suffice it to say that I do possess certain powers."

"Indeed your power is marvelous."

"We will not talk of that. We have more important business on hand just now, and at some future time we will discuss this matter."

"We owe our lives to you."

Pierre determined to cut off further discussion in this direction, and he said, turning to Martha:

"Your father expressed a desire to speak with you."

"Shall I go to him?" asked Martha.

"Do you wish to do so?"

"He is my father."

"But your duty is to your husband. Your father may mean to do you harm."

"I think not."

"But he would have put you to death."

"He was urged on by a fanatical sense of duty."

"And now you are willing to forgive him?"

"I forgive him all."

"It is the right spirit. Still, I think he seeks revenge. He may still consider it a sacred duty to slay you."

"What sayest thou, my husband?" demanded the wife, appealing to the one she loved so well.

"I will not interpose. He is your father. After what has transpired I do not think he will harm you."

"If you desire to see and speak with your father," said Pierre,

"you can do so with safety. I will accompany and protect you, if your husband is willing."

Harry consented, and Martha and Pierre started for the tomb; and as they proceeded our hero said:

"I will bid you be on your guard; but have no fear. Expect no genuine affection from your father, because I know he hates you."

"I am compelled to accept thy word, for I know thou art well informed," answered Martha.

"Yes, I possess deep discernment, and I've read nothing but hate in your father's eye. You must make up your mind to go away with your husband to a distant land, and never see your father after this day."

They reached the tomb, and soon stood in the presence of Jimsajee. The robber chief stood with folded arms and seemed to be in deep contemplation. When his daughter entered, he said:

"My child, I am glad thou hast come to me."

"I am glad to come to thee, father."

"Tis well! And now, my child, canst thou forgive thy repentant father?"

"Yes, my father: I do willingly and freely forgive thee."

"My child, art thou going away from me?"

"Yes, father. Henceforth I dwell with my husband."

"And we may never meet again?"

"It is possible."

"I would kiss thee."

Pierre had remained in the background. The robber chief was not aware of his presence. Our hero was on the watch, however, being fully satisfied that the fanatical father intended to slay his daughter, regardless of the consequences that might follow.

Martha advanced close to her father. He clasped her with one arm, and then suddenly raised the other, in which he held a glittering knife. The weapon, however, did not descend to its work, for the arm of the assassin suddenly became paralyzed, and Pierre betrayed his presence, and he said:

"Aha, assassin, I suspected you would attempt a trick!"

Martha had leaped back from her father's embrace, and Pierre, pointing to the knife which was still held uplifted in the Parsee's grasp, said:

"Whatever love your father ever had for you is turned to hate. He would kill you in cold blood. You owe him no more the allegiance of a daughter. Fly to your husband, who will tenderly care for you!"

Martha cast a look of commiseration and regret toward her father, and slowly moved away toward the outlet from the tomb.

"Monster, you will never see your child again!" exclaimed Pierre. "I divined your intent to deceive me, and I was at hand to frustrate it. I could strike you dead; but I will leave you to repentance."

Jimsajee's face was convulsed with wild passions; but he dared not move lest the spell of that terrible paralyzation should be thrown over him again.

Pierre followed Martha from the tomb, and a few moments later husband and wife were reunited. Martha related to Harry the attempt her father had made to assassinate her, and how our hero had rendered him powerless by the exercise of his wonderful power.

It was now decided to leave the vicinity. Before going, however, Pierre rewarded the heroine who had led him to the rescue, and she was warmly thanked by Harry and his bride, who promised at some future time to communicate with her.

It was long after midnight when the three travelers reached a deserted building in the midst of a dense forest. The party halted and examined the building, and decided to stop there for the remainder of the night. A bed was made for Martha within the building, and, it being a clear, warm night, Harry and Pierre concluded to camp outside.

The young men engaged in a long conversation. Harry related the story of his career in a frank, manly way, and Pierre felt a high regard for the young man.

Having told his story, Harry asked:

"Now, will you tell me who you are, and tell me, also, the secret of your mysterious power?"

"I can tell you who I am; but the secret of my power I can not reveal," answered Pierre.

"It is a wondrous power; but, although my curiosity to know how you paralyze a man the way you do is well-nigh overmastering, still I will rest content if you will but tell me who you are."

"I am the orphan child of two missionaries who came to India from America."

"My mother was an American woman," said Harry.

"Indeed! Then we must be brotherly. And now, what are your plans for the future?"

"I do not know what I shall do; but I would like to go to America and settle there."

"Why not return to England?"

"I dare not go back to England."

"Why not?"

"There would be a prejudice against my wife."

"Are you rich?"

"Well, no; I am poor. My people in England are well off; but I shall not bother them. The world is my home, and I shall get along."

Pierre meditated a moment, and then said:

"I am rich, and I can spare some of my wealth for you."

"But I am a stranger to you."

"That makes no difference to me. I am sure you are a worthy young man. I do not know that I have a living relative, and I will adopt you as my brother, and we will proceed to England together."

They talked on until near morning, and ere they went to sleep it was agreed that they would go to England together.

When morning broke the party awoke, and after partaking of some food, which our hero carried in his saddle bags, it was decided

to proceed to the nearest town and purchase two horses, and then start on a journey for Calcutta and take passage to England.

We will here state that Pierre had made very satisfactory arrangements as far as money was concerned. His baggage was stored in Calcutta. He had foreseen every contingency, in fact; and when in England he would have unlimited sums of money at his command.

The party arrived in a small town about noon, where horses were purchased, and they proceeded on their way. In a few days time they reached Calcutta, where our hero completed arrangements for their voyage to England.

When dressed in neat-fitting European clothing, Martha's beauty became even more conspicuous, and because of her attractiveness it was decided that, to save her from annoyance, she should remain closely veiled during the voyage. Some of the passengers wondered why she never appeared without her veil, and there was much curiosity betrayed concerning her.

One of the passengers was a man of giant stature. He was an overbearing fellow, selfish and regardless of the comfort and convenience of others. He was a loud talker, and terrorized every one who desired to pursue their journey in quiet and peace. At his fancy he would knock down a sailor who chanced to be in his way; and, strangely enough, the captain of the vessel appeared to stand in awe of him, and permitted the ruffian to do about as he chose.

One afternoon, while Harry and Pierre were stretched out on the forward deck, the former said, abruptly:

"Pierre, I feel very uncomfortable."

"Why, what's the trouble, Harry?"

"I fear that man Channing."

"What has he done, that you should fear him?"

"He has followed my wife about on two or three occasions when there were few passengers on deck and has spoken to her. You know she arises early in the morning and goes up to the deck to enjoy the fresh air before the other passengers begin to make their appearance, because they stare at her, and it annoys her. Now this bully is trying to thrust his attentions upon her, and she is compelled to remain in her room all the time. Something has got to be done."

Pierre, upon hearing Harry's statement, was thoughtful for a moment, and then he said:

"Have you spoken to him about it?"

"No, I haven't."

"I think if you were to speak to him he would desist."

"I dare not speak to him."

"Why not?"

"He might insult me, and then, knowing what sort of a man he is, I should be forced to kill him."

"You must not think of such a thing."

"He shall not insult my wife with impunity."

"He shall not; and now you leave that matter to me."

Pierre had just ceased speaking, when both were startled by hearing a scream. They jumped to their feet, ran forward, and met Mrs. Blankway advancing toward them, and at the same instant Pierre beheld the man Channing walking away toward the cabin.

"What has happened?" demanded Harry, who had concluded immediately that it was his wife who had screamed.

"That man attempted to raise my veil," she answered.

It had become rumored on the ship that Martha was very beautiful; and there had been various stories floating around about her, it being intimated that she was an Indian princess on her way to England to visit great people in London. Indeed, the wildest sort of stories were in circulation regarding her.

When Harry heard her statement he started to move away in the direction in which the man Channing had gone; but Pierre seized him by the arm and said:

"Hold on, Harry! Do not seek that man now."

There was a glitter in Harry's eyes, and it was very evident that a desperate resolution had come to him.

"Leave this matter to me," said Pierre.

"No; it is my duty to resent this insult immediately."

"You forget my power. I will punish this man. I will subdue him, and there will be neither fighting nor bloodshed. I will make him appear ridiculous; I will make him as meek as a lamb. Now promise to leave it all to me, will you?"

"It is my duty to meet him."

"Nonsense! I will make amusement out of it all. Leave it to me."

"All right, Pierre; do as you think best."

Martha was asked to return to her cabin, and a few moments later Channing, who was known as the colonel, walked back to where Pierre and Harry stood. He did not address them, but stood and stared at them in a very insulting manner.

Later in the day our hero sought an interview with the captain of the ship.

"Captain," said he, "are you aware that you have a passenger aboard who is insulting your other passengers at will?"

The captain did not make any answer, and Pierre continued: "I have come to you, sir, to request you to afford protection to your passengers."

"Who of the passengers needs protection, and against whom?"

"You know Mrs. Blankway?"

"Yes."

"She was accosted to-day by the person to whom I refer, who, after addressing her in a familiar way, boldly attempted to raise her veil."

"Who dared to this?"

"The colonel."

"I reckon it was only in sport. He did not mean anything. However, I will speak to him about it. I think I can promise you that it will not occur again."

The captain spoke in a manner which indicated that he considered the matter of little importance.

"Let us understand each other, captain," continued Pierre. "I have appealed to you; and I expect you to protect Mrs. Blankway from further insult. If you are unable to do so I shall take the matter into my own hands."

"Oh, you will!" said the captain, in a supercilious manner. "I would suggest, young man, that you leave this matter entirely to me."

"I will—until it occurs again; and now let me tell you that it will be better for the colonel to conduct himself like a gentleman."

A little later the captain received the colonel in his cabin, and said to him, in a laughing way:

"Colonel, you must not molest the veiled lady again."

"Who says I molested her?"

"Complaint has been made to me."

"By whom?"

"One of the young men who appears to be in her company."

The colonel laughed and said:

"The lady has made up to me: I shall not repel her."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Certainly! You do not suppose I would address a lady without receiving some encouragement!"

On the day following, Mrs. Blankway was again on the deck, when the colonel approached her. Although there was quite a number of passengers around, the fellow boldly addressed her.

"Madame—or miss—I have been given to understand that you have entered a complaint against me."

Martha made no reply, and started to move away, when the man caught her by the wrist and said:

"Hold on a moment. I insist upon an explanation."

"Unhand me, sir!"

The colonel laughed loudly and said:

"No, no, my pretty miss! Since you have resorted to warfare, we will fight it out. Now, on behalf of the other passengers, I demand to see your face. We have a right to know who you are."

Martha struggled to free herself, and at this moment Pierre appeared on the scene.

CHAPTER XI.

PIERRE was as cool as a cucumber as he advanced and said to the colonel, who towered head and shoulders above him:

"Release that lady, if you please."

The colonel did release Martha, and turning toward our hero, he asked:

"And who are you?"

"I am a relative of that lady."

The passengers, who were all watchers of the scene, wondered at the courage of the youth who stood so coolly facing the gigantic colonel.

"Oh, you are a relative of the woman, eh?" exclaimed the colonel, putting an unpleasant emphasis on the word "woman."

"I am."

"And you object to my speaking to her?"

"I most certainly do."

"Well, what do you propose to do about it, my little popinjay?"

"I'll tell you what I propose to do about it," answered Pierre, slowly and distinctly, "I am going to prove that you are a big, cowardly bully; that you are no gentleman, but a braggart, and a ruffian at heart!"

The boldness of the retort caused the colonel to stagger back and glare at the youth in astonishment. The other passengers also were greatly astonished at the lad's boldness. They all realized that he had spoken the truth: but none of them would have had the courage to have told the fellow so in such plain language.

When the colonel recovered from the first shock of his surprise he betrayed a disposition to make sport of the youth and treat the whole affair in a merry manner. He said:

"Well, you are a brave-spoken hop o'-my-thumb, anyway!"

"I never fear a big coward, and that is what I consider you."

"Be careful, my lad, or I may consider it necessary to cuff your ears and then wash your mouth out with salt water."

"Whatever you threaten to do to me I will do to you," came the bold answer.

Again the man recoiled in astonishment and ejaculated:

"Well, you are a bold talker!"

"And I mean all I say."

Harry had approached and was a listener to the whole confab.

There is a great power in boldness. It will sometimes cause the most desperate man to pause when he encounters a person with grit enough to call him down.

"You certainly amuse me, my little fellow."

"You want to get all the amusement you can ere it is too late; for remember he laughs best who laughs last."

"See here, you little imp, if you do not make yourself scarce instantly I shall cuff your ears," said the colonel, advancing menacingly toward Pierre.

At this moment the captain of the ship, who stood a little way off listening to the wordy war, stepped forward and said:

"This has gone far enough!"

"Do not interfere, captain," said Pierre. "I am doing you a service as well as every one else on this ship. I intend to make this overbearing bully the most subdued and humble passenger you have on board."

One of the passengers who had been watching the scene said to the captain:

"Do not interfere, captain. No harm will come of this little affair."

The captain walked away, with the remark:

"Very well; if you wish to have a little fun, go ahead."

"Hold on, captain," Pierre called out; "I want you to see the fun too."

There was something remarkable in the absolute coolness and confidence of the lad. In fact, the big colonel began to show signs of being tired of the contest.

"I reckon you had better clear out now," said the colonel.

Pierre laughed in an aggravating manner and said:

"Aha! It is as I thought!"

"And what do you think?" said the colonel, sneeringly.

"I thought you were a big coward, and now I am sure of it."

"Hold on, little boy; I may get angry and spank you. I've submitted to your impudence long enough."

"I mean to be impudent. I mean that all these people shall be witnesses of the fact that you are a big braggart, a coward, a man who dare not make good his word when his bluff is called!"

"If you do not hold your tongue I will lose my temper," said the colonel, who was now manifestly worried.

"No danger of that. You dare not lose your temper. You have already lost your courage, and a man who has lost his courage is pretty apt to keep his temper."

"Well, I'll be shot!" ejaculated the colonel.

"You would be, if you had your just deserts," said Pierre.

"This has gone far enough!" cried the colonel.

"Oh, no! We have but just commenced!" was the irritating answer.

The colonel stood for a moment irresolute, and then stepped toward Pierre menacingly. But our hero stood calm and resolute until the colonel reached forth to seize him, when suddenly he raised his arm. His would-be assailant immediately became rigid and motionless; and Pierre, while keeping one hand extended, with the other actually cuffed the bully's ears, and the spectators looked on in perfect wonderment.

The colonel received the cuffs without movement; but it was evident that he was conscious of the humiliation, for his eyes bulged with terror.

After Pierre had cuffed the colonel's ears smartly, he reached down and plunged one hand in a bucket of salt water—which had been mysteriously placed near him—and actually did rinse out the colonel's mouth; and the fellow submitted to this second indignity without making a motion to resent it.

After having carried out his declaration, Pierre waved his hand a few times, and life and motion appeared to return to his victim. But the poor fellow still stood like one dazed, and so remained until Pierre remarked:

"There, my good friends, I told you that this man was a coward and braggart."

And speaking to the colonel, he added:

"Will you now apologize to the lady?"

The colonel neither answered nor moved, but stood with a wild glare of surprise in his eyes.

The second time our hero asked the question; and then, raising his hand once again, a look of terror and agony supplemented the look of amazement on the man's face, and Pierre said:

"You will either apologize or die where you stand!"

The spell appeared to lift from the victim completely, and in low tones he said:

"I will apologize."

"I thought you would!" exclaimed Pierre; and turning toward Harry, he said: "Bring your wife here; this fellow has concluded to apologize for his rudeness."

"He can apologize to me instead," said Harry.

"Are you willing to apologize to the lady's husband instead of to the lady herself?" queried Pierre.

"I am," said the thoroughly subdued wretch.

"Do so."

"I sincerely ask your pardon for my rudeness to the lady," he said, in the most humble tones.

"You are at liberty to depart now," said Pierre; adding: "From this time forth be a man, lest some great evil overtake you; and mark well my warning."

The colonel, without a word of protest, walked away.

To say that the passengers were astounded by the scene they had witnessed would be putting it mildly. They were absolutely bewildered. It was the most singular scene any among them had ever beheld; and after the departure of the colonel, there followed a flood of wondering comments, and our hero was looked upon with feelings of awe.

The colonel, meantime, had sought his cabin; and he was a completely crushed and disgusted man. He had been a bully all his life, and he relied upon his great physical strength to defend him in the exercise of his brutal instincts. But here, upon the broad ocean, he had encountered a mere stripling who had disarmed him of his strength, who had actually paralyzed his whole body, and it had been done with but a wave of the hand. As he sat within his cabin he pondered over the matter a long time, and finally muttered:

"Whence comes that power? Who is this mysterious youth who lays my strength low as easily as though he were but brushing away a puff of smoke?"

After the excitement among the passengers over the strange exhibition they had witnessed had somewhat quieted down, Pierre and Harry had a long talk.

"Pierre, are you really but a real mortal?" asked Harry.

"I am but a mere mortal."

"Then how is it that, simply by a wave of the hand, you paralyze both man and beast at will?"

"I can tell you no more than I have told you on previous occasions, Harry. I have had revealed to me a mysterious force in nature—a force that is already known to the world—namely, electricity. But to me has been revealed a secret for the control and projection of that force without the use of any visible agency; and I am bound to keep the secret, for you can readily see to what base uses it could

be put were the secret known to evilly disposed persons; but when used to good ends it is a beneficent power."

"It is indeed. You saved my life and the life of my dear wife; and here again you have avenged an insult; and, what is more, you have probably saved my life a second time; for, as I live, had you not subdued that fellow, I would have been compelled to face him, and no one can tell what might have been the result of it."

"I don't think the colonel will again molest your wife, or any one else for that matter, during the remainder of the voyage," said Pierre. "In fact, I think we shall see very little of him."

Several days passed, and indeed little was seen of the colonel; but on the fourth day he sought an opportunity to speak to our hero, and, in a modest tone, he inquired:

"Are you a being of flesh and blood?"

"I owe you no information," was the reply.

"You are my master—"

Pierre smiled and turned away.

After many days the vessel reached Liverpool, and Pierre, with Harry and his wife, went ashore, and put up at a well-known hotel.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER remaining a few days in Liverpool, our party concluded to proceed toward London. They stopped over at Leamington, and there Pierre met with a strange adventure.

One evening our hero was walking out alone, when he met a young lady with a handkerchief to her eyes, like one weeping; and as she passed him he heard a sob. Pierre's sympathies were at once aroused, and he followed the girl. She wandered along the road leading toward Warwick, and when about half way there she halted and sat down near the hedge bordering the road, and then she sobbed as though her heart would break.

Pierre did not know what to do. At first the suspicion flashed across his mind that he was being allured by an English Phisigar; and then the thought came to him that there were no Phisigars in England.

Our hero contemplated the weeping maid for a few moments, and finally he decided to approach her. The weeping girl did not appear to be aware of his presence, and started as, in a gentle voice, he asked:

"Why do you weep?"

It was a clear, moonlight night, and as the weeping girl removed her handkerchief from her face and gazed at our hero he realized that he was looking upon one of the most angelic faces he had ever beheld.

The girl made no answer to Pierre's question, but simply looked at him in a confused manner.

"You must be in great trouble," pursued our hero.

In a voice of deep sadness the girl answered:

"The cause of my sorrow is not the concern of a stranger."

Her voice was sweet and the tones were sad, but she still spoke with considerable firmness.

"I do not wish to intrude upon you unless I can be of service to you."

"You can be of no service to me, sir."

"How do you know that?"

"No one can help me."

"Explain your trouble: possibly I may be able to help you," said Pierre, sympathizingly.

"I thank you for your sympathy, sir; but please do not question me. Go your way, and leave me to myself."

"Your reluctance to confide the cause of your sorrow to me only makes me the more anxious to hear your story. I have followed you a long distance. I have observed that you are in great sorrow, and I am sure that I can aid you, no matter what may cause you to weep."

"No, you can not aid me."

Pierre was fascinated as he gazed upon the lovely face, and, as the girl made a move to go away, he pleaded:

"Do not leave me!"

"I have told you that you can not help me."

"But you may be able to serve me," said Pierre.

"How?" asked the girl, eying our hero in a puzzled manner.

"If you will tarry a little longer I will tell you."

"I can not stop here longer."

"Will you give me your address, so that I can call on you at some future time?"

"No; I will not do that."

"You are very abrupt."

"I always say what I mean."

"I wish you would trust me."

The girl could not have failed to note the fact that Pierre was a handsome youth. He also spoke in a very gentle manner, and there was much real sympathy in the tones of his voice.

"I can not speak further," said the girl, sobbing afresh. "Oh, sir, please let me go my way!"

"No; don't go yet," commanded Pierre.

The girl dried her eyes, and she started and gazed in surprise, and suddenly there came a look of terror over her face, and speaking, evidently involuntarily, she muttered:

"I have been pursued!"

Pierre's curiosity became greater still at the girl's exclamation.

"Why are you pursued?" he asked.

The girl realized that she had involuntarily betrayed herself, and she said, in pleading tones:

"Please go your way and let me go mine."

"Listen," said Pierre. "A strange premonition warns me that you can be of great service to me. I have come a long way on an important mission. It may be that Fate has thrown you in my path to aid me."

The girl was not, as Pierre had observed, much over sixteen years of age. Hers was an intelligent as well as a beautiful face; and at the first glance our hero had become fascinated, and he was determined to know the cause of her sorrow. He had spoken the truth when he said that a premonition had run through his mind that it had been a strange fate that had thrown them together.

"I can be of no service to you. Please go your way!" cried the girl.

"Will you not tell me your name?"

"I can tell you nothing concerning myself."

"You need not fear me."

"If you are honest in your sympathy for me please leave me to my fate."

"I can not," said Pierre, whose interest was now thoroughly aroused. "The more you urge me to leave you, the more anxious I feel to learn what trouble has come upon you and why I have conceived such a deep interest in your affairs."

The girl was about to answer, when the sound of wheels was heard, and a look of terror overspread her face.

Pierre observed the terrified look that suddenly came over the girl's face, and he said:

"What do you fear?"

"I have been tracked!" she cried. "I must hide!"

"Remain where you are," said our hero, calmly. "I will protect you."

"You can not protect me!" cried the excited girl. "I will leap over this hedge and hide, and when the man in that cart arrives here he will inquire if you have seen me. Will you throw him off the track?"

"Certainly I will!" exclaimed Pierre; and he added, *sotto voce*, "I may throw him off the track literally."

Our hero assisted the girl over the hedge, and then he sat down on the very spot where the girl had been seated. She had not got out of sight a moment too soon to avoid discovery, as within a minute after she had scaled the hedge, a two-wheeled vehicle hove in sight, the driver of which was a powerful-looking, heavy-faced man.

Upon observing our hero, the man brought his horse to a standstill and, leaning over, he looked closely at Pierre; and then, turning his horse to one side, he leaped out, hitched his horse to a post, and advanced toward our hero.

"Aha!" he exclaimed, peering into the youth's face; "this is a good scheme, miss; but it won't work! I promised to catch you, but did not expect to run you down so soon. Your disguise is all right; yes, it is very clever indeed; but you can't fool me, you know! Come, now; get into the cart with me, like a good girl, and return to the school."

"What are you talking about anyhow?" asked Pierre.

"Oh, I expected you would try to face it out; but it won't work, miss! I'm onto this neat little disguise of yours! You can not play the young man game on me!"

We will here state that Pierre possessed a fair, smooth face, small features, and his hair was rather long; indeed, the general delicacy of his appearance might well have misled one prepossessed with a suspicion that he was a young lady in male attire.

"I think you are crazy!" exclaimed Pierre.

"You can't bluff me, Miss Emily! I want you to get into that cart at once."

"I will do nothing of the kind, sir; but, if you do not go off about your business pretty quick, I will toss you into your cart! I believe you to be a knave!"

The man laughed in a hearty manner and said:

"You are a good actress, miss; yes, you do it well; but all this will not go down with me. Come, now; get into the cart at once and return with me."

"I will do nothing of the kind."

"Do not compel me to force you into the cart."

"If I get into that cart you will have to force me in; but you will have a good time doing it."

"Come, now, Miss Emily, what is the use of all this talk? You are caught, and may as well submit at once and go back to school."

Pierre had observed the name the man used, and wild thoughts were chasing through his brain.

"Say, my man, I wish to ask you a question."

"Fire ahead!"

"Are you really in earnest in thinking that I am a girl in disguise?"

"Well, you are a good one, you are!"

"Let me tell you, sir, that, if you really think me a girl in disguise, you are mistaken, and had better go your way. If you are searching for a runaway girl you are losing time standing here talking with me."

"Well, well! You are a cool one, miss, and really you should be allowed to escape! And hang me if I wouldn't let you go were it not for one fact!"

"And what is that one fact?"

"I have promised to return you to the school; and, having once promised to do a thing, I make good my word every time."

"You will fail to make good your promise this time."

"Oh, no!"

"But I tell you, my man, that you have made a mistake."

"I can not waste any more time, miss. Will you get into the cart?"

"No, I will not."

Pierre had determined to let the man run away with his strange fancy, knowing that he would set him right in a most novel manner later on.

"I will take you in my arms and lift you into the cart, and tie you in it, if necessary. Would you like to have me do that?"

"I have no objection, if you are able to do it."

"Do not force me to carry out my threat. I do not want to resort to violent measures."

"You better not!"

"Oh, I know you will scream and raise a great hullabaloo; but that will do you no good when worst comes to worst. I'd rather do it quietly, however."

"Listen one moment, my good man. I tell you that you are laboring under a great mistake, and serious consequences will follow if you attempt to lay your hands on me."

"We'll see," came the answer.

CHAPTER XIII.

PIERRE had enjoyed the little encounter very much; and, as has been stated, strange, weird thoughts were surging through his mind as to the identity of the fair girl the man who confronted him was seeking. He wondered if the girl was a listener to all that was going on. If so, she would know that he had acted as her defender against the pursuer, and thus be more disposed to make a confidant of him.

"I have been very patient," said the man.

"You have certainly been very patient!" said Pierre, in an aggravating tone. "But I can not understand what hallucination has got possession of you. It is a very strange thing for you to come along here and assume that I am a maiden in disguise. You appear to be a good-hearted fellow, and if I were a runaway girl you are just the sort of man I would like to have recapture me. But honestly, my good friend, you are certainly deceiving yourself and losing valuable time if you really expect to capture some maiden fair to-night."

"Well, you do beat all!"

"Now, I've got a surprise for you," said Pierre.

"Indeed you have surprised me somewhat already."

"But I have a greater surprise in store for you."

"Well, what is your surprise?"

"I have denied being a girl in disguise; but now I propose humoring you fancy."

"Ah! Now you admit that you are a girl in disguise, eh?"

"For argument's sake, I will admit it—yes."

"There is no need of further argument. You can humor my fancy now by immediately getting into that cart."

"If you want to get me into that cart it is up to you to put me there. The wisest thing you can do is to go about your business."

"You dare me to put you into that cart?"

"Yes; I dare you to attempt it!"

"I see; you intend to make a big fuss."

"You have little idea as to what I intend to do."

"Now, see here, miss, I am beginning to lose my temper."

"So much the worse for you."

"Once for all: will your return with me or not?"

"No."

The man sprang forward and seized hold of Pierre; and then he stood like one suddenly frozen by the cold chill of death.

The great, powerful man was held powerless in the grasp of the youth whom he had mistaken for a girl in disguise. Only a moment did Pierre hold the surprised and suffering man, and then he pushed him away.

The man fell back, and seemed for a moment too weak to retain his feet; but soon he appeared to recover his strength and power of speech, and he ejaculated:

"What has happened to me?"

Pierre laughed.

"What do you think about the girl now, my friend?"

"Who are you, and what are you?" asked the man, with bulging eyes.

"I am the great magician of India, and I can root you to the spot on which you stand forever. See here, fellow, with whom you are dealing!"

Pierre raised his hand and a ball of fire stood directly in the man's face, dazzling him so that he could just perceive that he was in a shower of light. Like a flash the glare had come, and in an instant the ball of fire disappeared.

"What think you now?" demanded Pierre.

"I have a suspicion," said the man, in a faltering voice.

"Well, what do you suspect?"

"You may be the great magician of India, but it strikes me that you are more than that."

"Let us hear what you think I am."

"You are the great magician of the world—Satan himself. Yes, I expect to see you change again—transform yourself into some fierce monster."

"I'll paralyze your tongue for that speech," said Pierre; and on the instant the man was paralyzed.

A look of terror overspread the fellow's face. He appeared to make an effort to speak, but not a sound escaped his lips. But our hero soon removed the spell, and when his power of speech returned the man said:

"Can I go now?"

"Go where?"

"I wish to return to my home."

"But I thought you were sent to pursue a maiden fair!"

"I will go, with your permission," said the man, dejectedly.

"Will you tell me where you live?"

"No need to tell you anything!"

"I should like to know where you live, so that I will be able to find you when I want you."

"You will never find me if I can help it," said the man, in trembling tones.

"My good man, you can make a friend of me, if you will."

"I do not crave your friendship."

Pierre laughed in a merry manner, and the man made a move to go toward his cart.

"Hold on a moment," said Pierre. "One word, and I will let you depart in peace. What is the name of the girl whom you took me for?"

"Why do you ask, when you already know?"

"My good friend, you are determined to run on wrong lines. I am not the devil; I am but a mortal, like yourself. I am indeed a great magician; but I possess no supernatural power. Our meeting here was accidental. You made a mistake as to my identity, and you would not be set right. Now do not run off on another mistake. As I understand the matter, you seek a runaway maiden. I may aid you in finding her if you will confide in me."

"I have nothing to confide in."

"Now you would mislead me."

"No; I am telling you the truth."

"Are you not seeking a runaway maiden?"

"I am."

"You know her name, do you not?"

"Her name is Emily."

"And her last name?"

"I do not know."

"Be careful!"

"On my honor, I do not know."

"Tell me the circumstances under which you started out to find her."

"I live in C—. I have a client—a maiden lady—who had a young lady under her care who, this afternoon, disappeared. My client had reason to think the girl had run away. I was sent for and persuaded, or, rather, employed to catch the runaway."

"But when you supposed I was the runaway you invited me to return to the school."

"I believe the girl was a pupil of my client."

"You must know her name."

"I only know that her name is Emily."

"Did you ever see the girl?"

"Never to my recollection."

"What is the name of your client?"

"Miss Cassie Smith."

"And she lives at C—?"

"Yes."

"Do you know why the girl ran away?"

"No."

"You know nothing whatever, except the girl's first name?"

"No."

"It may go hard with you if you deceive me."

"You appear to be very much interested in the girl," said the man.

"I don't mind telling you that I am somewhat interested in her," answered Pierre.

"Do you know her?"

"I have met her. And now, my good man, you may go."

The man did not stop to parley further, but went over, released his horse, jumped into his cart, and said:

"I will bid you good-night."

"Good-night," said Pierre, as the man drove away.

Our hero waited until the man had driven out of sight, when he went to the hedge over which he had assisted the girl and called out:

"You may come now."

There came no answer, and again he called:

"Come on! There is no danger now."

Still there came no answer, and he muttered:

"I wonder where she can be?"

He leaped over the hedge and looked around, but he could see nothing of the girl. He searched in every direction, frequently calling out to her, but he could find no trace of the girl.

Pierre had become greatly interested in the girl. She was beautiful, and her name was Emily. Although he failed to learn her last name, he had his suspicions and was greatly concerned about her.

His search having proved fruitless, he decided to return to the town. When he reached the hotel, he told the story of his adventure to Harry Blankway, and concluded with the statement that he really believed the girl he had met was the Emily he was seeking.

Pierre had confided to a certain extent in Harry, and fully as concerned his commission to find Emily Thorne. He had not even concealed the fact that he held a large amount of treasure in trust for the girl.

After Pierre had concluded his story, Harry said:

"You must not be too sanguine about this girl being the one you seek simply because her name is Emily. Emily is a very common name in England."

"But this girl is beautiful."

"No doubt there are many beautiful girls of that name in England."

On the following day Pierre went to the town of C—, and sought out the lady, Miss Cassie Smith. He finally located her residence, and spent some time studying the surroundings. Having completed his survey of the premises, he sought an entrance to the house. He was met at the door by a maid, who demanded his business, and he stated that he desired to see Miss Smith.

The maid did not ask him in; indeed, she left him standing there and closed the door in his face. She was gone some time; but at length the door was reopened, and the maid asked:

"Please send in your name, sir."

"The lady will not recognize my name," said Pierre, as he handed the girl a card; and he added: "I am anxious to see Miss Smith on very important business, and I trust she will grant me an interview."

The maid went away again, closing the door in his face as before, and he was kept waiting a long time. Finally the maid reappeared and bid him enter.

Pierre was shown into a plainly furnished room, and was kept

waiting some time ere Miss Smith appeared; and when she did, he saw that she was anything else than the conventional old maid. On the contrary, she was a dark-faced, keen-eyed woman, with cunning and craft plainly expressed in every look and movement. She entered the room in a cautious manner, and, fixing her keen eyes on our hero, looked him over from head to foot.

Pierre had risen when the lady entered the room. She bid him resume his seat, at the same time seating herself.

"You wish to see me, sir?" she asked.

"Yes, madame."

"I do not remember having met you before, sir."

"No; we have never met."

"Neither is your name familiar to me."

"I presume not. I have but recently arrived in England."

"May I ask where you have resided?"

"I am from India."

The woman gave a start, and there came not only a strange look to her eyes, but a most singular expression shot over her whole face.

"You are from India?" she repeated.

"Yes; I arrived in England but a few days ago."

"And you have business with me?"

"Yes, madame."

Pierre was studying the woman, and there followed a rather awkward silence.

"Well, sir, I am prepared to listen to you," said Miss Smith.

"You had a young lady living here with you, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to make some inquiries about that lady."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Will you kindly tell me her name?"

Miss Smith smiled in a very sweet manner, and, in a pleasant tone of voice, said:

"I certainly must first know why you are making these inquiries, sir."

Pierre hesitated a moment, and then said:

"I will tell you frankly. I bear a message from India to a young lady, and I have reason to believe that the young lady I seek was recently under your care."

"Yours is a most singular statement," said the woman.

"How so, madame?"

"Why, if you have a message for a lady, it must certainly bear her address."

"No; the party sending the message did not know the lady's address. I was requested to hunt her up."

"Why do you come to me? What reason have you to think the young lady who was recently under my care is the lady you are looking for?"

"I was led to think so by accident."

"Indeed! And will you explain the circumstance?"

"I met the young lady who was under your care in a very strange way."

There came a startled look to the woman's face as Pierre made the foregoing statement; and, after a slight hesitation, she said:

"If you met the lady, why didn't you make the inquiries of her?"

"I saw her but a moment."

"Under what circumstances?"

"She was inquiring her way. I was attracted by her beautiful face. I heard her addressed by the name of Emily; and that is the name of the lady I seek."

"What is her other name?"

"For very important reasons, I can not disclose the family name of the young lady I am in quest of until she has been otherwise identified. That is the reason why I came here to ask of you the name of the lady who was staying with you."

"And that is your sole business with me?"

"It is."

"You should have got the information from the young lady herself. The fact of your not having done so leads me to suspect that you are not what you represent yourself to be," said Miss Smith.

"I will explain why," was the answer.

CHAPTER XIV.

PIERRE, while talking with Miss Smith, had been thinking certain matters over. He discerned that the woman, instead of being an innocent old maid, as he had pictured her to be by what the man who had been sent to capture the runaway girl had told him, was really a shrewd, designing woman. Under the new developments he decided that there was something wrong.

Pierre had said that he would explain why he did not ask the young lady her name. His explanation was that his attention was distracted a moment after he had conceived the suspicion of her identity, and when he looked again for the lady she had disappeared.

"I can not understand why you should hesitate about telling me the name of the young lady you are in search of," said Miss Smith.

"I can not tell you the name, for reasons which I have already stated," Pierre answered.

"Then you can not expect me to tell you her name."

"Very well, madame. If you do not choose to do so, I can probably gain the information in another direction."

There came a smile to the woman's face, and she said:

"I don't think you can."

Pierre was nonplused for a moment at the woman's answer.

"Wasn't the fact of the girl's residence here known to any one?" he asked.

"Yes; my neighbors well knew of her residence here."

"Then some of them must know her name."

Again the woman smiled in a self-satisfied manner and said:

"They do not know her name."

"Did you make a secret of her name?"

"Yes; of her right name. She was known as my niece—Emily Smith. You can not learn her real name save from me."

"Then you had a reason for concealing her name?"

"To speak frankly, yes."

"What was your reason?"

"You are very impertinent, sir! You refuse to give me any information, and yet you freely ask me questions. You will get no information from me."

"Perhaps you might be persuaded to reconsider your resolution?"

"Yes, when you tell me your purpose. If you would tell me why you seek this information, I might as freely answer all your questions."

"May I ask if you are related to the girl?"

"I can not answer you."

"Are you friendly toward her?"

"I love her as though she were indeed my own child."

"Then why did she run away from you?"

There came a strange light in the woman's eyes as she said:

"How do you know she ran away from me?"

"I learned from her own lips that she was a fugitive."

"And yet you claim you had no conversation with her!"

"She did not tell me she was a fugitive. It was because of an involuntary exclamation that escaped her lips that caused me to suspect that she was a fugitive."

"You say you come from India?"

"Yes."

"Is the name inscribed on your card—Pierre Bindalais—your right name?"

"It is the name I am known by."

"You had better tell me the truth; and, what is more, you had better tell me your purpose in seeking my ward."

"I can not explain my purpose in seeking the girl."

"Then I know of no reason why you should take up more of my time."

"You absolutely refuse me any information?"

"I do."

"I shall gain the information I seek."

"That is your own business, sir."

"I feel satisfied that the young lady who fled from here is the one I seek."

"You have a right to suspect what you choose."

"If she proves to be the young lady for whom I am searching, and it develops that you have treated her cruelly, it will go hard with you."

"Do you threaten me, sir?"

"No; I merely throw out a suggestion."

Pierre concluded that nothing was to be gained by prolonging his visit further, so he rose to go.

"Remember," said Miss Smith, "I have only refused you information because of your reticence toward me."

"Very well, madame."

"I say now that if you will make a confidant of me I will tell you all I know about the young lady."

"I do not choose to make a confidant of you, madame."

"I do not mind telling you," said Miss Smith, tantalizingly, "that Miss Emily is again under my care."

Pierre started.

"But you will never find her," the woman continued, "unless you learn her whereabouts from me; so you had better think matters over, and when you conclude to trust me I will give you all the information you seek."

Pierre reflected for a moment, and decided to switch off on a new tack. He said:

"Madame, I really have obtained all the information I seek."

Miss Smith looked puzzled, and Pierre added:

"Yes, I am satisfied as to her identity."

"You may be mistaken."

"I am not mistaken."

"It would be safer for you to confide in me."

"I do not think I need any further information from you."

"You are fully satisfied as to the girl's identity?"

"I am."

"May I ask whom you think the young lady may be?"

"I know her name is Emily Thorne," Pierre answered.

The woman's face assumed an ashen hue, like one suddenly detected in a crime, when Pierre pronounced the name, "Emily Thorne." For a moment the woman's agitation was so great she could not speak.

Pierre smiled in a self-satisfied manner. His nonchalance seemed to nerve the woman, and by a great effort she managed to regain her self-control, and she said:

"I feared you really did know the identity of the girl who is under my care and were about to mention her name. Indeed the anticipation caused me considerable terror; and when you merely mentioned the name of some girl by the name of Emily Thorne the revulsion of feeling overcame me for an instant."

Miss Smith smiled in a forced manner after delivering herself of this, as she evidently considered, clever explanation of her sudden fright, and then continued:

"There are reasons why I do not desire the identity of my protégée to be known. You seek a girl named Emily Thorne. I sincerely hope you may find her. I would gladly aid you in locating her if I could; but I never heard the name before. Now, as you have been so frank, I will be equally frank. The name of the young lady who is under my care is—"

The woman stopped short, and Pierre, who was a quick and observant fellow, heard several faint taps. One less observant than our hero would not have observed these little taps; but Pierre was an expert electrician, and he interpreted their meaning almost on the instant. The taps conveyed this warning:

"Be careful!"

Pierre was greatly surprised at this evidence of a conspiracy; but he did not betray the fact that he had "caught on." He decided, of course, that there was a listener to his conversation with the woman; that, in fact, there was a preconcerted design on the part of some one to frustrate his efforts to learn the identity of the young lady who, Pierre was now certain, was none other than Emily Thorne.

The woman had, as stated, suddenly come to a halt in her revelation; and, as she did not continue and give the name, our hero said, interrogatively:

"Well, madame?"

"I have reconsidered."

"And you will not give me the name?"

"Not now."

"Why not?"

"I can not explain. I may give you the information you desire at some future time."

"Oh, you need not trouble yourself, madame! I am fully satisfied that the name of the young lady whom you have in your custody is Emily Thorne. I can not be misled. I will bid you good-night, madame."

"Don't go yet."

"I know of no reason why I should remain any longer."

Again there came that mysterious tap-tap, which our hero interpreted to say:

"Let him go!"

"Then you are determined to go?"

"I am; but our interview has been very satisfactory to me, I can assure you, madame."

"It has been very unsatisfactory to me, sir. Indeed, it is a singular experience. A stranger enters my house and proceeds, in a mysterious manner, to question me; and, although he obtains no information, he goes away with the assurance that he is fully satisfied."

"Yes; I reiterate it: I am fully satisfied."

"I have formed a conclusion in regard to you," said the woman, abruptly

"Very likely you have," said Pierre, calmly.

"My conclusion is that you are a rogue."

Pierre smiled and said:

"Be careful, madame; you do not know whom you address."

"No; I do not! Perhaps if I did I would lose no time in summoning the police."

Pierre raised his hand, when suddenly the woman's form became rigid. She appeared to make an effort to speak; but no sound came forth from her palized lips, and a look of terror overspread her face. For a moment Pierre contemplated the woman; and then, raising his hand and making a few passes, he departed.

An instant after our hero had left, a dark-faced man entered the room, and at that moment Miss Smith, who was just beginning to regain her senses, toppled over. The man sprang forward and caught her, saying, in a low tone:

"The excitement has been too much for you, my dear."

"I do not know what came over me," said the woman, in a husky voice. "Suddenly I lost all power of speech, and my limbs became paralyzed."

"It is probably a nervous attack, my dear. Why didn't you call for assistance when you began to feel shaky?"

"I felt as well as ever I did in my life, when suddenly it seemed as though the very life were being crushed out of me."

"Who is that fellow?"

"I do not know."

"You never saw him before?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear of him?"

"Never."

"Did you never hear Emily speak of a friend?"

"No."

"This is all very strange."

"Yes, it is very strange."

"We must find Emily at all hazards."

"A very shrewd man is on her track. He will find her."

"It is possible that this fellow has found her."

"I think not."

"You are coming along all right now, my dear. I will follow that fellow and find out who he is."

"Be careful, Amrac!"

"You can trust me. I am always careful."

"But that man is possessed of some mysterious power."

"Bah! There is no mystery that is beyond me. I possess all the knowledge known to the fakirs of India. This youth, although a bright, smart fellow, is a mere tyro. He possesses one secret, however, I believe, that it is necessary for me to penetrate. Yes, my dream is about to be realized, I believe. I have always claimed that some day Emily would bring us a fortune. I am satisfied that this young man knows the secret of her wealth. I will follow him up; I will find out who he is, and then I will wring from him the facts I wish to learn; and the man Amrac hastily left the room.

In the meantime Pierre, who had driven to C— in a dog-cart, entered his vehicle and started to return. He had permitted his horse to jog along at a slow gait, and had gone but a short distance, when suddenly he was startled by a strange occurrence.

A woman had leaped into the cart beside him!

The woman urged his horse into a smart trot ere he had had time to speak, and when he had recovered from his surprise the woman said, in an imperative tone:

"Do not speak now! You are being followed!"

Pierre was a very much surprised youth; but his curiosity was aroused, and he permitted the woman to urge his horse forward without protest.

"Can I take the reins?" she asked.

Pierre passed the reins to her, and she urged the horse to a gallop. She ran the horse for at least two miles, and then she let him come down to a trot; then, in an abrupt manner, she said:

"You are surprised?"

"Well, yes; I am somewhat surprised, madame."

"You do not understand it at all?"

"I should say not!"

The woman laughed in a very peculiar manner and said:

"You just came from a house in C—, where you went to inquire about a certain young lady?"

"You are quite right, madame."

"The lady you seek is named Emily Thorne?"

"Yes."

"And you suspect that the name of the girl who escaped from that house is Emily Thorne?"

"I do."

"Why do you seek her?"

"Madame, please tell me who you are. Remember you have approached me in a most extraordinary manner."

"I admit that. Now, to prove to you that I am worthy of your confidence, I will tell you that the young lady who escaped from that house is Emily Thorne; and I would like to know how you happened to go there to make inquiries about her."

"Later on I may answer your question."

"Do you know where the girl is now?"

"No."

"Then we must find her. She knows that I am her friend."

"Are you really her friend?"

"I am."

"And do you live in that house?"

"I was there temporarily."

"Were you there when the girl ran away?"

"No. If I had been there at that time I should have gone with her. I have sought the girl, but have not found her as yet. The man you saw in that house is a devil."

"I saw no man there!" exclaimed Pierre.

"Well, whether you saw him or not, there is a man there, and he was listening to every word that passed between you and that woman."

"I knew that some one was listening."

"And how did you come to know it?"

"For the present that is my secret," said Pierre. "Will you tell me what you know about Emily Thorne?"

"I will—as you say—later on. In the meantime we must find the girl. The man who is following you may circumvent us."

"Is there a man following us?"

"Yes."

"How do you know there is?"

"I saw him start in the direction you took soon after you went out of the house. I realized what his intentions were and hastened after you. I took a short cut across the fields, overtook you, and jumped into your cart. That man is sure to find you. Now, take my advice, and prevent him if you can."

"Oh, we'll attend to him!" exclaimed our hero. "But what are that man's relations to the girl Emily Thorne?"

"It is a long story."

"Repeat it to me."

"I will later on; but, in the meantime, throw that man off your track. You know where to find him: do not let him have the same advantage as concerns you."

"Your advice is very mysterious."

"It is from that man that Emily Thorne fled."

"If you are her friend, why did you not long ago warn her of her danger, if she was in danger? Why did you not take measures to protect her?"

"I was preparing to make a revelation to her, when that man stole her away. I searched for her, and finally trailed her to that house. I was listening to a conversation between that man and woman when you were announced. It appears that from the very first moment of your presence they suspected that you were in some way interested in the girl—even before either of them had seen you—and while you were talking to the woman the man was listening in the next room. I was also a listener, and when opportunity offers I will explain everything to you."

"Is this man an East Indian?" asked Pierre.

"Yes," answered the woman, with a surprised look.

"What is his interest in the girl?"

"He believes her to be a great heiress."

"What led him to such a suspicion?"

The woman hesitated a moment, and then asked:

"What is your interest in the girl?"

"I can not tell you."

"Why not?"

"I must first know who you are, and be satisfied of your fidelity, my good woman, and then I will reveal to you all that it is necessary for you to know."

"I should like to ask you one question," said the woman, abruptly.

"Proceed," said Pierre.

"Did you ever know Veltajimsajee?"

Our hero gave a start of surprise and amazement. The woman had mentioned the name of the old magician.

"Ah!" exclaimed the woman; "I understand now! My question is answered. You have met Veltajimsajee. You are in his employ. You ask me who the man Amrac is. I can tell you."

"Do so."

"I must first understand fully your relations to the girl."

CHAPTER XV.

PIERRE observed that the woman spoke in broken English. He noticed also that she was a middle-aged woman; and he also recognized the fact that she was an East Indian.

"I will admit this much: my interest in her is connected with the old man whom you have mentioned."

"Do you really know his interest in the girl?"

"I do."

The woman was thoughtful a moment, and then she asked:

"Are you an honest man, or a villain, like Amrac?"

Pierre had resumed the reins and was driving the pony. He recognized that they were approaching the town, and he said:

"We have not much more time to talk. I am near the place where I am temporarily residing."

"Will you not heed my warning?"

"And what is your warning?"

"You must not return to your abiding place."

"What would you have me do?"

"Ride on; throw that man Amrac off the track."

"I think I have thrown him off the track."

"No! it will be no easy matter to throw him off your trail. You will have to resort to a skillful trick to escape him. That man has a scent like a dog. It was because of this quality that the old magician selected him."

A suspicion began to form in our hero's mind. He had heard of Indian thugs following men even to England. And it was possible, too, that this woman was a Phasigar. He recalled the singular manner in which she had joined him. Her story might be partly true or wholly false; but the chances were that she was really an emissary of the man who, she said, was following him. It might be her intention not to lead but to mislead him. He determined to be very cautious. He brought the pony to a halt.

"What will you do?" demanded the woman.

"We will stop here until you have convinced me of your honesty," said Pierre, looking straight into the woman's eyes.

A strange expression shot from the woman's eyes, and there came an ominous look to her face.

"Do you doubt my story?" she asked.

"I—er—never saw you until half an hour ago."

"That is true; but haven't I proved to you that I am a friend of the girl you seek?"

"How?"

"Did I not tell you what that woman refused to reveal? Have I not told you the real name of the girl who was under that woman's care? If I were not her friend, why would I have told you what she refused to reveal?"

"That revelation has due weight with me; but I must have absolute proof of your honesty and fidelity before I can trust you."

"It is more necessary that I should have the assurance of your honesty and fidelity," came the declaration.

"I did not seek you," said Pierre.

"Yes, I sought you; that is true. I want to save you from that terrible man Amrac; and I advise you to drive on, and take every means you can think of to throw him off the track."

"Suppose he does run me down?"

"If he does, and considers it to his interest to do so, he will kill you."

"I think I can take care of myself."

"Ah, you don't know him! That man is a secret assassin—an Indian thug. You have lived in India?"

"I was born there."

"Then you will understand when I tell you that the man Amrac was the leader of a band of thugs in his native country. He is one of the most dangerous men in England at this moment. He is versed in what the English call the black art. He is master of the secrets of all kinds of subtle and deadly poisons and potions. He is a wonderful magician, practicing the most terrible deceits and allurements. He is relentless and heartless. He knows no God, no country, no friendship, save that his god is gold, his passion gambling. He leads a double life. He poses in London as a gentleman, where he lives in grand state; but in reality he is an apostate Parsee, a common robber and cheat. He is now in desperate straits. His hopes are founded on the girl Emily Thorne. Any one who would come between him and his purpose in that direction he would destroy as you would step upon a venomous insect. He works in secret, and has secret agents, men who would stop at nothing to do his bidding. He must not learn where you live; he must not learn anything about you, or, I live, he will surely destroy you. Mark well my words and trust me!"

Our hero was deeply impressed by the woman's words. She did seem to be speaking with the utmost frankness.

"And you think that man is on my track?" asked Pierre.

"I am sure he is."

"You know how he came to be interested in Emily Thorne?"

"I do."

"And will you reveal all this to me?"

"I will, as soon as we fully understand each other."

"What would you suggest that we do now?"

"I would recommend that you send this horse to the stable, and that you and I go on afoot, until we are certain we have thrown that man off our track."

"All right," said Pierre, after a moment's reflection; "I will follow your advice."

"Is the pony your own?"

"No; I hired him."

"If we drive to the vicinity of the stable where he belongs he will find his way home?"

"Yes, no doubt he would."

"We will do that, and then we will proceed afoot."

"Where do you propose to go?"

"We will make sure that the man is really following you," said the woman, "then we can decide on the best course to pursue."

PIERRE, at the time of his arrival in England, was in his nineteenth year, and he was a remarkable young man. He possessed discernment and perception of the keenest sort. He was brave, skillful, and in various ways highly accomplished; and, above all, he was honest, and would have surrendered to Emily her fortune had she been one of the most hideous of creatures; but, having seen her, her rare beauty had captivated him, and he became the more earnest and enthusiastic in her behalf. He had pondered well over all the woman had said to him, and he asked:

"What is your name?"

"My English name is Sarah Phye."

"Sarah, I will follow your advice," said Pierre; "and if I am led to suspect that you are false or treacherous, and have allied yourself with me in order to betray me, it will prove a fatal experiment to yourself."

"It is on behalf of Emily Thorne that I have allied myself to you. I believe you to be her real friend; and if what I believe is indeed true, it will prove a very fortunate circumstance that we met."

"Does this man Amrac know of your existence?"

"He does; but he believes that I have either returned to India or that I am dead."

"And yet you say you were in that house?"

"Yes; I followed him secretly. I have long been on his track. It was my intention to steal the girl."

"Does Emily know of your existence?"

"She believes me dead."

"And what were your relations to her?"

"I was her ayah from the moment she was born to the time she fell under the influence of that man Amrac. He thought he had killed me, but later on was led to believe that I had escaped with my life and had returned to India."

"You say that were Amrac to know of your presence in England he would kill you?"

"Yes."

"Why do you not appeal to the law for protection?"

"It would be impossible to produce any evidence against him. He works in secret. That man can administer a poison so deadly that the victim would die in terrible agony, and yet all the physicians on earth could not discover the real cause of death. Oh, he is a dangerous man!"

"And yet, notwithstanding all you tell me, I do not fear him," said Pierre. "But now, what do you propose to do to throw this man off our track?"

"Drive near the stable and let the horse go."

Pierre urged the pony forward, and in a few minutes he halted and they alighted from the cart. He then started the pony forward. The intelligent little animal went straight in the direction of the stable, and Pierre said:

"He will go home all right. Which road do you propose to take?"

"We will walk toward Warwick."

They proceeded along the road at a rapid gait, and when about half-way to Warwick, Sarah said:

"Now we will climb over this hedge and watch for awhile, to see if that man is really following you."

They climbed over the hedge, took up a position where they could obtain an unobstructed view of the road without being seen themselves, and waited. An hour passed, but they saw no signs of Amrac.

"Well, what do you think about it?" asked Pierre.

"It would seem that for some reason he has not followed you."

"He may come along yet. We will stay here awhile longer, and in the meantime I would like you to give me all the information you possess about this man Amrac and Emily Thorne."

"But you must tell me your story."

"I can not do that."

"Will you tell me your interest in Emily?"

"I will. I possess the secret of her fortune."

"Then she is really an heiress?" exclaimed the woman.

"Yes; she a great heiress."

"And from whom does her fortune come?"

"The old magician."

"And you have come to put her in possession of her fortune?"

"I have."

The woman was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"It is indeed fortunate that you and I met!"

"It would appear so. Now tell me about that man."

"The old magician Veltajimsajee—"

Pierre gave a start. The woman ceased speaking, and, after a pause, she asked:

"What causes your surprise?"

"It sounds so odd to hear you mention the name of my old benefactor and instructor so familiarly."

"I admitted that I had heard of him."

"Did you ever know him?"

"I only know that he saved the life of Emily when she was an infant."

"And what reason had you or the man Amrac to suspect that she was to inherit a fortune?"

"That revelation came in a most remarkable manner. It was a discovery made first by myself, and afterward confirmed, in a strange manner, by Amrac. I will tell you all later on; first let me continue the story that I had commenced."

"Proceed."

Veltajimsajee, the old magician, somehow lost track of little Emily, and he employed several men to search for her. Among these men was the fellow Amrac—

"What became of the others?" interrupted Pierre.

"I have reason to believe that they were all secretly assassinated by Amrac. One thing I know: Emily was brought to England

while a mere infant, and I was brought here with her. When she was about twelve years of age she was stolen, and from that day until this night she has been held a prisoner by that man Amrac.

"From whom was she stolen?"

"The parties to whom she had been committed. I was accused of being a party to the abduction, and I was arrested and put in jail; but I escaped, and ever since have been a fugitive. I began a search for the child, and in time I got upon the track of Amrac. I knew better than any one else how and for whom to search, as I had learned the secret that the child was a probable heiress."

"How long have you been pursuing Amrac?"

"For more than three years, and to-night was the first time I got an intimation as to the whereabouts of Emily. I haven't seen her since the night she was stolen—yes, stolen from the room where she was sleeping with me. I was strangled and left for dead; but I recovered, and, as I told you, I was arrested as an accomplice of the abductors. My story, notwithstanding the attempted murder of myself, was not believed: it was looked upon as a trick to cover my crime. One thing I learned: the child was taken to France and kept there for over two years. It was after her return to England that I got upon the track of her abductor. And now you know all the facts."

"You have not told me all yet," said Pierre. "You have not told me how you discovered that Emily was an heiress."

The woman was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"I will reveal all to you; but first answer me one question: How is it that you can put Emily in possession of her fortune?"

"I am a joint heir with her."

The woman gave a start and exclaimed:

"Are you the babe who was saved on that night when the mission was destroyed?"

"I am."

"That is strange. It has always been supposed that you were dead."

"I was rescued by Veltajimsajee, and he watched over me like a father as long as he lived. He has instructed me in the arts of magic and revealed to me mysteries that give me a wonderful power over man and beast."

"Then indeed you are a match for Amrac!" exclaimed the woman. "Veltajimsajee was the greatest magician in all India."

"But you have not told me how you discovered that Emily was an heiress," said Pierre, abruptly.

"I will tell you," replied the woman. "Upon Emily's arm is written, by some mysterious process, a strange legend. It must have been put there by the old magician, and very few could translate the meaning of it. I, being the daughter of a magician, was able to read it; and Amrac, being a magician, he also succeeded in reading the strange revelation preserved in such a remarkable manner."

"Well, what is the interpretation of the cabalistic lettering on the girl's arm?"

"It is to the effect that Emily is a child of destiny, and that upon her eighteenth birthday a secret will be revealed to her, if she is alive, and that the secret will be revealed under certain conditions; and no matter upon what part of the planet she may be at the time."

"How is it that Amrac did not take the girl back to India after he got her in his possession?" asked Pierre.

"He dare not return there."

"Why not?"

"If there is one person on earth whom he fears, that person is Veltajimsajee."

"But the old magician is dead."

"That makes no difference."

"I do not understand. Does he not know that the old magician is dead?"

"It is possible he knows that he is dead."

"Then why should Amrac fear him?"

"Because he knows that the old magician has a successor, and that the successor would be as fatal to him as the old magician himself. And now mark the hand of fate: Veltajimsajee has a successor, and already that successor is on the track of the assassin Amrac! No, no; he can not escape Fate! He has violated some sacred oath, and Nemesis is already pursuing him."

"How?"

"In your person. You do not fear him; and you have found the girl in the most remarkable manner. Fate led you to her. Indeed, can you not see that Fate led me to you? And Fate is leading Amrac to his doom through you."

Pierre was deeply impressed by the woman's words of prophecy. "It is strange," he said, "that all these things should have chanced to happen."

"It is not chance; it is Fate."

"And now, what shall we do? It is evident that I have not been pursued."

"We can not be sure of that. He may have obtained information that has satisfied him and hauled off the trail; but he will make a great struggle against you."

"But he knows nothing of me."

"His suspicions are aroused—yes, it is possible he has already seen the hand of fate. He may already recognize in you the successor of Veltajimsajee. He will seek to destroy you. His safety lies alone in your death. But I know he will not succeed, because the fates are against him. But you must have a care!"

"Well, what shall we do now?"

"We had better remain where we are awhile longer. Tell me under what circumstances you and Emily met."

Pierre had decided to trust the woman, and he proceeded and related all the facts of his meeting with Emily.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN our hero's narrative was completed, the woman said:

"Ah, you can see that it is Fate! And now we must find the girl, and in the meantime you must keep concealed from Amrac."

"If it is Fate, why should I keep concealed from this man? If my star is to blot his star from the firmament, I need not fear him."

"Ah, but no one can forecast the lines of fate! We can but follow them. I believe it will happen as you have said; but we dare not presume, for we do not know. And now we—" The woman stopped speaking, and a look of singular intelligence flashed over her swarthy face as she muttered, in a husky whisper, "What does that mean?"

The two, during all the conversation which had occurred between them, had remained behind the hedge, and they had just made a move to return to the road when the sudden change in the woman's demeanor occurred.

"We have been trailed," she whispered.

"By whom?"

"That man Amrac of a certainty."

"We will meet him!" exclaimed our hero.

"No, no!"

"But you forget Fate! Yes, you told me I was his adverse fate; and I am if he is a foe to the girl Emily Thorne."

"He is her foe, or, rather, he means to use her for his dupe."

"Have you an idea as to his designs?"

"Yes. He intends to make Emily his wife."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes: I have positive evidence of it."

"How did you obtain it?"

"I have been on his track. I have overheard several conversations between him and the woman, and I have learned many facts. In the first place, Emily has a fear of that man. She accidentally learned that he was to visit her, and that is why she ran away."

"Why did not the man Amrac start in pursuit of her?"

"He would have done so had you not appeared upon the scene. But listen!"

"I hear nothing."

"It is strange! It may be that I only scent his presence; but I am sure that man is near."

"Let us disclose our presence."

"No, no!"

"You wish to hide from him?"

"Yes."

"It will be better for me to meet him face to face. I will do so."

"No, no! Let me persuade you."

"I will meet this man here and now," said Pierre, firmly. "You can watch and behold what follows our meeting. I will make him tremble to his heart's core; and, what is more, I wish to mark him well. Having once done so, we will have less reason to fear him than he will to fear us."

"You will make a mistake."

"Now, you need not be seen. You can remain in your hiding place here and observe our meeting."

"Well, if you are determined to go forth to meet him I warn you to be on your guard."

"I will be on my guard. He can not harm me. I will show him that I am his master."

"I trust you are not making a mistake."

"I have considered well," said our hero. "You need not fear. You lay low now, and I will go forth and meet that man Amrac, if he is really on my track."

Pierre ran along the hedge for some distance and then leaped the fence and gained the road. He then walked back to a point opposite to where the woman Sarah lay concealed, and halted. He looked around in every direction, but could see no one, and stood thinking over all that had occurred. He had not altogether dismissed the idea of possible treachery on the part of the woman, although he had every reason to believe that she had told him the absolute truth.

He was still pondering, when he observed a man walking along the road. The man staggered along slowly, like one under the influence of liquor. Our hero walked toward the stranger, and when near to him the man came to a halt and saluted him. Pierre approached close to the stranger and looked in his face, and at a glance recognized Amrac from the description he had received.

"Good-evening, my friend," said the stranger.

"It is rather late in the evening," was the reply.

Pierre recognized that the man was only playing the inebriate rôle. He was as sober as a judge, and his keen eyes were studying our hero. But Pierre was also doing a little of the "study business," and as he looked the fellow over he felt that he had every reason to believe all that Sarah had told him. The fellow answered her description to a certainty.

Our hero decided upon his course of action. He advanced closer to Amrac and peered straight into his face. The man laughed and said:

"You will know me when you see me again."

"Oh, I recognize you!"

"You do, eh? And who are you?"

"You ought to recognize me."

"I never saw you before."

"Neither did I ever see you before; but I recognize you. Yes; you are the man I have been looking for."

Amrac glared in amazement, and all signs of inebriation vanished at once. His swarthy face assumed a fierce look, and he demanded:

"So I am the man you have been looking for?"

"That is what I said."

"And who are you?"

"That is for you to determine. I know who you are, and that is enough."

Amrac was evidently greatly disturbed, and Pierre, in an aggravating tone, said:

"Yes, I know you well, and we are indeed well met. It is Fate! Your day of reckoning has arrived, you villain!"

"How dare you speak to me thus?" the man asked. "Whoever you are, I want you to understand that you must not insult me, or it will go hard with you."

"A moment ago you were too drunk to recognize an insult. You have sobered up very quickly. And now own up that you were looking for me."

"Who are you?"

"I am the man who visited Miss Smith to-night. You were listening while I was conversing with her, and you have followed me. You know the information I seek. You can give it to me, and you shall."

"You are a crazy man!"

"Yes; I am crazy if you will have it so. Anything to please you, so long as you give me the information I seek. I wish to find the girl Emily Thorne."

"What do I know about her?"

"You know all about her. You stole her away some years ago, and have held her a prisoner ever since. But now a day of reckoning has come!"

It would be impossible to describe the varying emotions that passed over the man's face.

"I know of no girl named Emily Thorne," he said. "I never did know such a girl."

"Then why have you followed me?"

"I have not followed you; I met you accidentally."

"It's false!"

"How do you know I followed you?"

"I let the light in on your brain and read your thoughts. See here!"

Pierre stepped back a few paces, and suddenly a bright light shone right over Amrac's head. The man actually quivered with fear and astonishment. The flash of light only shone for an instant; and when it disappeared our hero said:

"You see how easy it is for me to shed light in dark places?"

The man had evidently recovered his nerve, for he laughed and said:

"That was a fine trick; but you can not deceive me. And now let me tell you that you are laboring under a great mistake."

"Oh, I am, eh? Your name is Amrac, isn't it?"

The mention of his name caused the man to start in amazement.

"You see I know to whom I am talking. And now let me tell you something more: Veltajimsajee, the great magician, sent me to find you."

This last announcement did not appear to disconcert the man as greatly as Pierre had anticipated, and for a moment silence followed; then our hero said:

"You see, it is useless for you to attempt to deceive me."

"I do not understand you."

"You will understand me before I get through with you," said our hero. "You were sent to England on a mission by the old magician?"

"I was never out of England. I am English born; so, you see, you are wide of the mark."

"What do you know about a girl named Emily Thorne?" asked Pierre, abruptly. "Why did she run away from Miss Smith?"

Amrac appeared to study a moment, and then he said:

"Do you think that girl is Emily Thorne?"

"I know she is Emily Thorne."

"Suppose she is Emily Thorne, why do you seek her?"

"She is a great heiress."

This last declaration caused the man to betray greater agitation than any previous statement of our hero's. Again he pondered, and finally said:

"Will you pay a good sum to find her?"

"I will."

"Possibly I can aid you."

"I think you can."

"Where are you stopping?"

"It does not matter where I am stopping. You can give me any information you possess right here."

"I have no information now. I may be able to obtain some for you."

"You can give me all I need."

"I can not. But there is one thing I will admit: there is a possibility that the girl who escaped from Miss Smith is the girl you seek. I can tell you a strange story about her, and then we can compare notes."

"Tell me the story."

"Not now; but I will make an appointment to meet you in London."

"You must first give me a good reason for meeting you there."

"I do not know the real name of the girl who ran away from Miss Smith. There is a party in London who knows all about her. I did not pursue the girl, because I knew she would go to this party in London. I will find her there, and I will learn for you her real name. I have no particular interest in the girl. Miss Smith was employed by a gentleman in London to act as her guardian. And now, sir, I want to ask you a question: Why did you call me a villain?"

"Because I have reason to believe that you are a villain."

"You are correct!" exclaimed the fellow. "Yes, I am a villain; and it is because of that fact that I am able to serve you."

It was Pierre's turn to start in surprise. He did not understand the man's tactics in making this admission.

"What do you mean?" our hero demanded.

"I mean that I can find the girl for you; but first we must arrange a price for my services."

CHAPTER XVIII.

PIERRE, as we have said, was somewhat taken aback. This was a move on the part of Amrac that he did not quite understand; and, after a little thought, he said:

"What is the use of this pretense?"

"You can't call it pretense when I admit that I am a villain—when I admit that I can serve you—and only demand a price to be fixed for my services."

"Do you admit that you are Amrac?"

"I do not; but I can serve you just the same."

"You would deceive me."

"No; I do not. I can prove that I am not Amrac; but I know the man."

"Where is he?"

"In London."

"And does he know anything about the girl?"

"We have not fixed a price yet. You seek the girl, and you also seek Amrac; but let me tell you that you will find neither of them until you make satisfactory arrangements with me. Yes, I can give that man a cue. His identity is so hidden that no one can discover it—unless I aid them. So you had better come to terms with me at once if you mean business."

"If I come to terms with you, what will you do?"

"I will bring you and Amrac together."

"And how about the girl?"

"She is under the care of Amrac."

"But she has escaped from his care."

"Oh, no! The girl who was under the care of Miss Smith is not the girl you seek."

"Who is the girl who ran away from Miss Smith?"

"You have no interest in her. The girl you seek is Emily Thorne; and I am the man who can put you on her track."

"What are your terms?"

"I will name my terms when we meet in London."

"I can not trust you."

"What will it avail you if you refuse to trust me?"

Pierre thought a moment. The man had indeed asked a very pertinent question.

"I believe that you are Amrac. If you can prove to me that you are not, I will come to terms with you."

"I can prove that to your entire satisfaction."

"How?"

"I will bring you face to face with Amrac; and when you see us standing side by side you will know I have told you the truth. Come; mark well my features; fix my appearance in your mind, and so be prepared for the proof."

Our hero was certain this was all bluff; but he did advance and look the man over carefully; and when his scrutiny was concluded, the man said:

"Now, do you think you will be able to judge?"

"Undoubtedly," said Pierre. "Are you a friend of Amrac?"

"He has been my friend."

"Then why will you betray him?"

"Because I am a villain. I only consider my own interests. Besides, he is a doomed man anyhow; the fates are against him, and I wish to cast my lot with the rising star. Can I speak in plainer language? All you want is to find the girl and punish Amrac. I will aid you to do so, and my reward will come from you."

"How do I know you will not betray me?"

"You must see that I do not have the chance. I would betray you if your star was descending and you could be of no further advantage to me. Do you want anything plainer than that?"

"You are certainly very frank."

"It would not pay me to be anything else. I am simply looking out for myself. I only care for you simply for what I can make out of you."

"Then you admit that you will speak falsely when it is to your interest to do so?"

"Yes."

"You spoke falsely when you said you were not seeking me."

"I did."

"And what was your purpose?"

"I wished to learn your business. I had certain suspicions in regard to you, and I set out to verify them. I have succeeded. But I tell you now that it will be a long time before you find Amrac. Unless you engage me to betray him, you may never find the girl."

"Why not?"

"Amrac will learn of your presence, if he does not already know of it. He is a desperate fellow, and he would kill the girl before he let her fall into your hands. I tell you the truth. Come to my terms and I will aid you. I will trick Amrac—yes, I will kill him, if necessary. Come, now; is it a bargain between us?"

"Name your terms," said Pierre.

The man appeared to ponder a few moments, and then he said:

"I will fix my terms when we meet in London."

Pierre meditated a moment, and he revolved in his mind all the facts as they appeared. Of one thing he felt assured: the woman Sarah had intended to tell him the whole truth. He felt that he could trust her. Still, in some small particular she might be mistaken, especially as concerned the identity of the man Amrac. The fellow who was talking to him appeared to be recklessly frank.

"I will meet you in London," said Pierre.

"When?"

"To-morrow night."

"Very well. At what place?"

"I know nothing about London. You name the place."

The man named a place and asked:

"At what hour shall we meet?"

"At any hour that suits you."

"Say one hour before midnight."

"Very well, that suits me," said our hero. "Now I will bid you good night, and trust that you will not fail to meet me in London."

The man did not move away, and Pierre said:

"You can go."

"I might want to communicate with you before meeting you in London. Where are you residing now?"

"There will be no necessity for further communication with me before our meeting."

"You do not trust me, I see."

"You can not expect me to trust a confessed villain. I shall be suspicious of everything you propose, everything you tell me, until you prove your fidelity to me."

Slowly the man moved away. Pierre watched until he was no longer to be seen, and then he proceeded to the hiding place of the woman Sarah. He believed she had overheard every word that had passed between himself and the man, and he was anxious to hear what she had to say on the subject. Our hero soon reached the spot where he had left the woman, but she was nowhere to be seen. She had disappeared as mysteriously as the girl had vanished the night previously. He searched for her in every direction, and uttered signal calls; but there came no answer, and finally he determined to give up the search and return to his hotel.

It was after midnight when he reached the hotel. He went to his room, but did not immediately retire: he sat thinking over the events of the evening. He sat thus, lost in thought, for about half an hour, when suddenly there came a tap at the door. He arose and opened the door, and there stood the woman Sarah!

Pierre was greatly surprised to see the woman. Without saying a word, she hurriedly entered the room and closed the door.

"You are surprised to see me?" she said.

"I am."

"I overheard every word that passed between you and that man."

"I intended that you should. But why did you flee away?"

"I wanted to watch him after you had parted from him. I thought he might follow you."

"Did he?"

"No; he returned to C—. And now, what do you think of his statements?"

"I do not know what to think. You heard all he said?"

"Yes."

"He denied being Amrac."

"I know he did; but that man is what he acknowledged himself to be: a base scoundrel. Don't you be fooled; the man is really Amrac."

"What was his purpose in denying his identity?"

"He has a deep purpose. He means to kill you."

"Did I do wrong when I agreed to meet him in London?"

"That depends. But he has a well-laid scheme in his mind."

"Then you are certain it was Amrac?"

"I am. He was under a disguise. I know just what he intends to do—yes, I have penetrated his trick."

"What does he intend to do?"

"He is made up as a double. He has a confederate who will appear just as he did to-night. That double will lead you to the presence of Amrac, and then—"

The woman stopped short, and our hero asked:

"Well, what then?"

"He will carry out his purpose: he will kill you."

"Would you advise me to meet him, as agreed?"

"Yes; but we must arrange a scheme against him."

"I do not fear him."

"Your courage is admirable; but you must not walk into a trap unguarded."

"I neither fear him nor his gang of thugs. I have set out to find Emily Thorne, and I will find her."

"The girl is not in his possession now."

"Have you no idea as to where she may be?"

"No."

"Well, I shall go to London and meet this man Amrac. It will be necessary to thoroughly subdue him, and then I think there will be no difficulty in finding the girl."

"When will you go?"

"In the morning on the first train."

"I will meet you in London."

"When and where?"

"You need have no concern about that. I will appear to you at the proper time. And now, good-night. We will meet again in London."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN again alone, our hero resumed his meditations. He thought over the whole series of incidents as they had successively occurred, and as his suspicions as regarded the woman Sarah returned, he muttered:

"It is possible that, after all, I am to be made the victim of a conspiracy. It is all very strange. That man admits that he is a villain, and this woman makes peculiar admissions; and there appears to be a coincident regularity in the appearance of both of them. I will be on my guard."

Pierre managed to get a few hours' sleep, and in the morning he held a long talk with his friend Harry. He related to the latter all that had transpired. After he had concluded, Harry said:

"It looks as though there was a deep scheme on foot."

"What do you think of the woman?" asked Pierre.

"It is possible she is honest. The ayahs are very faithful to their charges usually."

"Would you meet this man in London?"

"Certainly. You are well armed with a secret power. You need not fear."

"But the girl?"

"You can still carry on your efforts to find her. These people will certainly do so, and if they discover her before you do you may never succeed in getting her. I will aid you. I have an old relative, I learn, living near Oxford. It is but a short run from here. I will take my wife down and leave her with this relative. I will then join you in London, and together we will solve this mystery."

It was so agreed; and a little later Pierre took the train for London, where Harry was to join him at an early hour in the evening.

On reaching London, Pierre located in an obscure hotel, and then started out to see the sights of the great city. About eight o'clock in the evening he was joined by Harry. They had a long talk, and finally decided on their course of action, after which they separated.

Pierre wandered down Whitehall and passed along to Westminster Bridge. He started to cross the bridge, intending to stroll on the Surrey side, when he was joined by a woman, whose face was closely veiled.

"I am here, you see."

"What, is it you, Sarah?"

"Yes, I am here. And now, what is your programme?"

"I would rather hear what you have to suggest."

"Who is the man who is stopping with you at your hotel?"

"A friend."

"One whom you can trust?"

"Yes."

"One who knows your mission in England?"

"Yes; he knows all about my affairs. He knows also of my meeting with you and that man Amrac."

"Will you meet Amrac to-night?"

"What do you think about it?"

"Can your friend be depended on in an emergency?"

"Yes."

"Is he a man of courage and discretion?"

"Yes."

"Amrac's double will propose to lead you to an interview with Amrac."

"So I imagine."

"Do you know the risk you take in meeting him?"

"What is the risk?"

"That man will have everything prepared to assassinate you. His house will be lodged with a portion of his gang of thugs."

"Do you only discern this, or do you know it to be a fact?"

"I know it to be a fact."

"How did you gain your information?"

"I have been on Amrac's track. I came from C— on the same train with him. I overheard a conversation between him and some of his men."

"Do you know where his house is located?"

"I do not. That fact he has succeeded in keeping concealed from me. But mark my words, if he carries out his scheme, ere another sunrise your dead body will be floating in the Thames."

"Then you would advise me not to meet him?"

"No, but I would advise you to take every precaution."

"What precautions can I take?"

"Go to Scotland Yard and procure the services of a detective."

"Under some circumstances your advice would be good; but I do not need the services of a detective. I can take care of myself."

"You do not fully appreciate your danger."

"That man can not harm me now that I am forewarned. There is one thing you forget: I possess great secret power. I tell you the man can not harm me."

"I will not attempt to advise you further. But I will give you one hint: Amrac will be a danger to you as long as he lives."

Pierre well understood what the woman meant.

"What steps are you taking to find the girl?" asked Sarah.

"I thought I would wait until after my interview with Amrac before doing anything."

"It may be as well," said the woman, as she started to go away.

"When will I see you again?"

"After you have met this man."

"And where will I meet you?"

"I will be at hand when you least expect me. In the meantime I will search for the girl."

"Have you a clew?"

"No; but I will search all the same."

At an hour before midnight our hero was at the place where he was to meet the man who was to conduct him to the presence of Amrac. He had arranged all his plans and was well prepared for what he knew would prove a very exciting and perilous adventure.

Pierre waited for some time before the man he was to meet appeared. Indeed, he began to have doubts of the fellow's keeping his appointment, when suddenly a man approached and said:

"You see I am here."

The two men met directly under a street lamp. Our hero looked closely at the man, and at first he was led to conclude that it was not a "double," but the same man whom he had met on the road near Warwick.

"I am here also," said our hero.

"You have thought over all that passed between us?"

Pierre was closely scrutinizing the man, and the impression deepened that he was not talking to a double, but the same one he had met before. He determined to make a test.

"I have thought over all that passed between us," said our hero; "but you made one little statement that perplexes me. You first insisted that you were an honest man, and just before we parted you confessed to being a villain."

"It was not a good scheme for me to admit at the start that I was a villain."

"I could not understand you. And after telling me that, you expressed reluctance to betraying Amrac."

Pierre was playing his part well. He was correctly stating what

the man had said, but in a different connection, thus completely changing the meaning of his statements.

Pierre was seeking to discover if the man would correct him; but he did not. Our hero then made statements directly contrary to what had passed, and the man became confused and did not know how to answer him, and the conviction was forced upon his mind that, despite the fellow's resemblance to Amrac, he was altogether another person.

Our hero's motives were to verify the statements of the woman Sarah. He carried on his trick for some time, until fully convinced that the woman had told him the truth, and then he said:

"We were to arrange terms?"

"Yes."

"What amount have you decided on?"

"One thousand pounds."

"And what do you propose to do for this money?"

"I will introduce you to Amrac."

"But how will that serve me?"

"The girl is in his possession."

"That is strange."

"Why?"

"I have reason to believe that the girl is not in his possession."

"You are laboring under the impression that the girl who ran away from Miss Smith is Emily Thorne?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken."

"But you admitted she was the girl."

"Then I did it for my own reasons. She is not the girl. The girl you seek is at this moment under the care of Amrac. He is too smart ever to have permitted her to be placed under the care of any one else."

"Very well. Lead me to Amrac."

"But how about our terms?"

"I accept your terms."

"You must pay in advance."

"Oh, no! I will pay you the money when the service is performed."

"Have you the money with you?"

"Yes."

"And what is the full text of the service I am to perform?"

"You are to introduce me to Amrac, and if I find the girl under his care I will pay you the money."

"Let me see the money," the man demanded.

Pierre had anticipated some such demand and had prepared himself to meet it. He showed the man a thousand pounds; let him count it over himself, to satisfy him that there was no deception.

"You see I am prepared to make good my word," said Pierre.

"I am satisfied."

"Then we will proceed."

"But you must submit to a condition," said the man. "You must enter a cab with me, and promise not to note the direction we take."

"This was not understood to be a part of our agreement."

"I make that condition now."

"There is one thing I wish to tell you, my man: it will go hard with you if you intend any treachery."

"I do intend treachery, but not toward you. I am to betray another, and it is for that betrayal you agree to pay me."

"I am to pay for learning the whereabouts of the girl."

"Yes; I understand."

"And you will also understand that I do not trust you, and will watch you."

"That is all right. I am accustomed to being watched. I have an agreement to carry out, and I will do my part."

"And I shall do mine."

"We will go."

"All right."

"Walk this way."

They walked a few blocks, and finally came to a place where a cab awaited; and Pierre inwardly ejaculated:

"The fun commences!"

CHAPTER XX.

PIERRE and his conductor entered the cab, and orders were given to drive on. Our hero was silent and thoughtful. He was revolving in his mind all possible contingencies. After a short drive the cab came to a halt.

"We will alight here," said the man.

They got out of the cab, and Pierre found himself in front of quite an imposing looking house.

"Do we enter here?" he asked.

"We do."

"Remember, I am prepared for any sort of treachery."

"That is all right. The man you are to meet is the man you should warn. I but fulfill my contract. You are to deal with Amrac. He is a cunning man. It is right for you to be well prepared."

Our hero observed a very peculiar expression upon the fellow's face as he spoke; but he did not recoil from carrying out his adventure. He anticipated meeting with treachery. He was expecting to encounter peril.

The two entered the house. Our hero was led up the stairs to a room on the second floor. A dim light was burning in the room.

"Go in there and wait," said his guide.

Our hero entered the room. He looked around, and his eyes rested upon many very curious objects. It was really an Oriental apartment in its furnishings. He was still studying the objects in the room, when he became conscious of a presence, and looking up he beheld a strange-looking man, who had noiselessly entered the room. The man was dressed in a long, flowing gown of many colors on which was worked all manner of curious designs. It was a

robe such as would be worn by a magician who sought to impose upon the imaginations of his audience.

The strangely attired individual crossed the room and extended his hand to our hero. The latter accepted the proffered hand, and the man said:

"Can I be of any service to you?"

"Possibly you can," answered Pierre. "Whom do I address?"

"You are in the presence of the greatest mind-reader and magician in the world. We have never met before, and yet I can read your past. I know what concerns and interests you in the present. I can unfold to you the future."

"If you can do all you promise I have certainly come to the right place."

"I can do all I have promised. Now, what is your business with me?"

"You say you can read the past," said our hero; "I would like you to read mine."

The man meditated a moment, and then said:

"It might prove a waste of time. It is evident you have come here to utilize my gifts in a matter of greater importance. I will say, however, that your name is Pierre Bindalais. You are the adopted son of a French gentleman who lives in India. You were the protégé of the great magician—my former master—Veltajimsajee. To you he has revealed certain secrets. You have come to England under his instructions to find a girl named Emily Thorne. You think she is under my control. Now you may state your business."

"You say we never met before?"

"We never met before."

"You are mistaken: we have met before."

"When and where?"

"Last night, on the Warwick road."

The man's face clouded and he said, in a severe tone:

"You are speaking on the basis of a conclusion you have formed in your own mind."

"I am positive you are the man."

"You think I am the man who conducted you here?"

"No, I do not. The man who conducted me here is your made-up double. You are the man I met—you are Amrac, the man sent to England to find the girl Emily Thorne. You received no information as to why she was wanted. You suspected, however. You found the girl, and then decided to become false to your trust; and, acting on suspicions you had formed in your own mind, you determined to secure the girl and use her to serve your own purposes. You did not know you were watched; you did not suspect that your doings and purposes were known. You were permitted to go on, however, until he who sent you to England was ready to demand that you cease plotting against the girl. I was sent here to confront you. I am here to demand the surrender of the girl. I am Fate, and you are at my mercy. I can spare you or destroy you, as I may decide. And now I demand the surrender of the girl, and then I will decide what your fate shall be. Do not attempt to evade me; but make up your mind to do what is right, or the consequences will rest on your own head."

The man listened to Pierre patiently; but many changing expressions played over his swarthy face, and all were supplemented by a satirical smile, as he said:

"You come well armed?"

"I am prepared for all eventualities. There can be no misunderstanding between us."

"And I am in your power?"

"You are."

There came a fierce look in the man's eyes as he said:

"Do you think I can be intimidated by your silly statements? No, no! And now, sir, I have a request to make. You say there can be no misunderstanding between us. I trust there will not be. Later on I will answer your statements in detail, if it becomes necessary. In the meantime, however, I desire you to answer a few questions. What is your interest in the girl?"

"I seek her to put her in possession of her fortune."

"Is it at your command to bestow upon her?"

"It is."

"You are a rogue! You are not in possession of the girl's fortune. You are seeking information so that you can nibble at the gold. Yes, you are a fraud! You say I am in your power. You make a mistake: you are in my power. Your life is in my hands. When you came here you entered the lion's den. I need but give a signal and you will be crushed to death in my presence. And you shall be unless you prove your words true!"

Pierre was not disturbed in the least by this tirade.

"You threaten me, eh?" he said, in a firm voice.

"I do not need to threaten you, as you are but a puny antagonist. And now mark my words: a confession alone will save your life."

"You can not scare me," said our hero; and he laughed in a careless manner.

"I do not seek to scare you; but you shall learn that you are in my power."

The man waved his hand, and suddenly Pierre felt a constriction all over him. He attempted to start from the chair in which he sat, but found he was pinioned; he could not move hand nor foot, and his body was held as though in a vise, and against him pressed great projecting spikes, terrible instruments of death, which, if they pressed an inch closer, would penetrate his body at every point. Indeed, he was within the grasp of death, and a most terrible death.

For an instant our hero's nerve failed him. He had encountered a devilish device of which he could not have formed the least conception. His position was a terrible one, and he was indeed at the mercy of the fellow Amrac. He had come prepared for an encounter with thugs and assassins, but he had not dreamed of becoming the victim of any such ingenious Oriental device.

Amrac stood with folded arms. There was a demonic expres-

slan upon his cold, hard face, and a shrill, metallic laugh resounded through the apartment.

"So I am in your power!" he exclaimed, tauntingly.

It was only for an instant that our hero lost his nerve. He recalled that he also possessed a power—a method for destruction which was especially deadly and also invisible. He thought quickly. He knew that he might be destroyed in an instant, but he also realized that there was no immediate danger. The terrible death-spikes would go so far and no further for the time being; he knew Amrac wished to talk with him, wished to force a confession.

Our hero was not helpless, nor disarmed. He could use his mysterious force even when bound hand and foot by this grim instrument of death, and he determined to take a long chance.

When Amrac, in a satirical tone, said, "So I am in your power!" Pierre did not make a reply. He heard the words, but he was busy thinking.

"A wave of my hand and your mission is ended," said Amrac.

Having decided upon his course, Pierre answered:

"Yes, you are in my power."

"Be careful!" exclaimed Amrac, with a sardonic grin.

Our hero had his eyes fixed upon Amrac. He was ready to read every changing expression. He knew that the death-grip which held him was but a mechanical contrivance, and required physical effort to force it to do its deadly work. And, as stated, he knew that the fellow was not ready to finish him. The lad held valuable information.

"I am careful," said our hero, in response to Amrac's satirical warning. "I was careful before I ventured here."

"Oh, you think some one may come to your rescue?"

"Never mind what I think!"

"It is death to an enemy to enter this house. I can cause death to leap from the walls, to spring up from the floor, to shoot forth from a mirror. No one can enter this house with hostile intent and live to tell the tale. I defy the police. You are absolutely at my mercy. A motion, and you die an excruciating death. But I may spare you—yes, your life is in your own hands. A confession will save you. I will give you time to decide what you will do, now that I have shown you your peril."

Amrac made a motion and the spikes pricked our hero's skin. The man laughed in a fiendish manner.

Pierre did not blanch, although he suffered some physical pain, for the terrible engine pressed the pointed spikes through his clothing and close to the flesh.

"Young man," said Amrac, "I bear you no malice. I desire to spare you; but that is for you to decide. Will you die or confess?"

"What shall I confess?"

"You claim that you possess the secret of the girl's fortune?"

"I do."

"That secret should be mine. Now, confess that your claim is a pretense."

"But it is not a pretense."

"You really possess the secret of her fortune?—you can deliver it or withhold it?"

"I can."

"The secret should be mine—it shall be mine, or you die!"

"If I die, the secret will never be yours."

Amrac smiled and said:

"That is a point well taken; but you forget that through torture I can force the secret from you. Now, as I said before, you can save yourself only by revealing to me the secret, otherwise you die. I have had stouter men than you in that chair; and they have been equally brave at the start; but in the end they surrendered. Will you surrender?"

"I will never reveal the secret to you."

"Consider well."

"I have considered well."

"You came here for a purpose?"

"I did."

"What was your purpose?"

"My purpose in coming here," said Pierre, deliberately, "is to make you confess."

"That's a good joke," laughed Amrac. "What am I to confess?"

"The whereabouts of Emily Thorne."

"The girl is here in this house."

"Then you shall surrender her to me."

"Young man, your talk is mere buncombe. You are in my power, and I will give you two minutes to decide what you will do."

"And if I refuse to reveal the secret?"

"Your agonies will commence."

"Let them commence!" said Pierre, defiantly.

"Ah, you defy me! I hesitate to lacerate your tender form; but if you drive me too far I will be compelled to witness your writhing. Come, now; save yourself all the pain and agony. Listen: you, I take it, wish to get a portion of the money. I may make terms with you."

"You are a confessed villain. I will not make terms with you."

"Be careful!"

"I do not fear you."

"A motion, and you die!"

"And my secret dies with me."

"What do you know?"

"All that you would like to know. I can anticipate the revelation that will come on Emily's eighteenth birthday. I will reveal to her that she is a great heiress, and I will tell her where the wealth that is hers is hidden. The knowledge is mine. If I die, the secret dies with me. If you torture me, I will never open my mouth."

"You talk like a boy."

"You will learn that I am a man before you get through with me."

"Come, you and I shall be friends."

"Never!"

"I will share with you."

"I will have no dealings with you."

"And you still defy me?"

"I do."

"On what do you build your firm resolution?"

"By the decision of Fate you are a doomed man. I have power over you, and I can destroy you when I will."

"What a boaster you are! You miserable little wretch, I am half tempted to let the spikes pierce your flesh."

"You dare not."

"I dare not, eh? You shall see!"

Amrac made a motion to put his threat into execution, when suddenly he became rigid. Pierre had got in his work. The man's limbs were held as though in the icy grip of death. His eyes expressed his terror. He could move neither hand nor foot.

Pierre, however, was not yet out of danger. It was but a stand-off, as the boys say. Should he remove the spell he was doomed. His only hope lay in extricating himself from his position while he held his enemy under the spell. The man could not speak, but he could hear, and Pierre said, with an ironical laugh:

"Mister, what do you think now?"

Amrac's face expressed his anguish.

"Why don't you wave your hand and cause the spikes to pierce my flesh?" asked the youth in a taunting tone.

Pierre began to study the mechanism of the deadly machine which held him in its grasp. The spikes had been withdrawn an inch or two from his person, and our hero grasped the frame-work of the machine at one side near the center and gently pushed it back. To his surprise and joy it moved easily, but in the wrong direction—it closed in on him. But he had solved the problem. He pulled the frame-work toward him and slowly the menacing spikes receded, and in a few seconds he rose from the chair a free man.

It had proved an easy matter for Pierre to liberate himself from the cunningly devised instrument of torture; but he realized the fact that, had Amrac been free to operate the machine, he could have prevented any attempt of his victim to liberate himself.

A smile of satisfaction beamed forth from our hero's face as he advanced toward Amrac and said:

"How would it do to put you in that chair?"

It would be impossible for us to depict in words the expression that crossed the fellow's face.

Our hero waved his hand and the spell was removed. Amrac could now move and speak; but for a moment he stood motionless and silent, and Pierre said:

"Mister, you see now you are my slave. I can strike you dead; I can put you in your own death-chair. You are at my mercy."

The man did not answer. He had encountered the surprise of his life. He had been the victim of a power such as he had never seen exercised before. He was scared and bewildered, in fact, completely undone; but he at length made a move, and Pierre, suspecting his purpose, said:

"Attempt to give an alarm and you die. And mark well my words: I do not command this because I fear the presence of others. I can strike a dozen men dead. I do it because I desire to have a talk with you. I came here for that purpose. I told you I came prepared for work."

As the youth spoke, he waved his hand, and again Amrac became rigid; but for an instant only, as Pierre immediately released him from the spell, and said:

"You will obey me, or die."

"What would you have me do?" asked the man in a husky voice.

"I do not seek your death; if I did, you would fall dead at my feet. You are at my mercy. I can read your purpose. You have but to decide in your mind upon a trick, and I know your design. When I sat in that chair I knew instantly when you had determined to work the machinery that would have caused the spikes to penetrate my flesh, and I struck your powerlessness. I will know if you form any other design; so be careful, as the next time I will strike you dead."

"What would you have me do?" came the question again.

"Sit down in that chair," came the command.

CHAPTER XXI.

PIERRE had indeed proved his wonderful powers. Amrac was benumbed and dazed, and mechanically he obeyed and sat down in the chair indicated.

"You asked a confession from me," said our hero. "I now demand one from you."

"I have nothing to confess."

"Then you can be of no service to me. You may be in my way. I may as well dispose of you at once."

Our hero waved his hand and again the spell seized the man Amrac. He became rigid and powerless; and when the spell was removed he sat limp and helpless, as after each shock he became weaker and weaker. Indeed, he had lost his spirit altogether.

"You said the girl was in your power. Where is she now?"

"I do not know."

"Will you confess all?"

"What is it you would have me confess?"

"I would know all about the girl Emily Thorne."

"I do not know where she is. I put her in charge of Miss Smith, and she ran away. I have not seen her since."

"Have you searched for her?"

"I have agents searching for her now."

"Do you possess the proofs of her identity?"

"I have no proofs; but I am fully satisfied as to her identity."

"Does she hold any proofs?"

"There is an old woman, I believe, who holds proofs of her identity."

"And who is this old woman, and where does she live?"

"I do not know who she is. I only know that she exists somewhere, and that she possesses all the proofs."

"How did you obtain your information?"

"I can not tell you that. I can only say the proofs are in existence."

"Amrac, you have lost your chance. I will go away now; but we shall meet again in the near future."

The man made no answer, and our hero left the room and descended the stairs. He had gone but a few steps when a noose suddenly dropped over his head; but fortunately he had a sharp knife in his pocket. As the noose struck his head Pierre raised one hand and clutched it tightly, and ere it began to close around his throat he whipped out his knife with the other hand and severed the cord.

Our hero succeeded in making his way to the street-door without further molestation, and soon gained the street. He walked along, and had proceeded but a short distance when the woman Sarah glided to his side.

"You have been in that house?" she asked.

"I have," replied Pierre.

"And you have succeeded in coming forth alive! What happened while you were there?"

"Amrac sought to kill me."

"And you killed him?"

"No; I spared him. But he was at my mercy."

"You did wrong to spare him. He will pursue you. I tell you it is now your life or his, and you had better clear him from your path, if you can."

"I can do so at will."

"I do not know what your mysterious power is; but I do know it will be better for you when that man is removed from your path."

"We will consider that later on. In the meantime, answer me: Have you secured any clew to the girl?"

"Not yet. But I shall continue my search, and I will meet with success eventually, I know. I never give up. If I succeed in obtaining any clew to the girl I will report to you. Good-night," and the woman darted away.

Our hero returned to his hotel. He went to Harry's room, and they held a long talk, and on the day following Pierre set out to look for the girl Emily Thorne. He had seen her face, and he spent the whole day walking about the city in quest of it. Night came, and he had met with no success. After dinner he again went out on the street, and was walking along, when once again the mysterious Sarah glided to his side. Her eyes gleamed with excitement.

"You have news?" said Pierre.

"Yes; I have something very important to tell you," replied the woman, quickly. "Last night a lady fell fainting to the street. A cab was passing at the moment. Its only passenger was a gentleman. He saw the lady fall and ran to her assistance. He tore aside her veil, and disclosed a beautiful face. He carried the lady to the cab and drove away."

"Well, what do you argue from all this?"

"I think the lady may have been Emily."

"What leads you to such a suspicion?"

"She ran away, and was probably penniless. She must have walked a long distance; possibly she was without food. She would be likely to become exhausted and fall by the way."

"There is something in what you say. How did you learn the facts you relate to me?"

"I overheard two women talking about the incident."

"Have you any idea as to the identity of the man who rescued the lady?"

"Yes; his name was mentioned by one of the women. It was Lord A——, one of the most notorious *roués* in all London."

Pierre thought the matter over for a moment, and then said:

"This is an incident of some significance, and I shall investigate it at once."

That same night Pierre set out to make some inquiries about Lord A——. He sauntered up to Scotland Yard and lay in wait until he saw a man come forth whom he took to be a detective. He followed the man, and finally saw him enter a chop-house. Pierre followed him in and boldly took a seat at the same table.

The man seemingly paid no attention to our hero; but in reality he was scrutinizing him closely all the time.

"You are a detective, are you not?" asked Pierre, pleasantly.

"Well, young man, suppose I am a detective?"

"I wish to obtain some information from you."

"I may be able to give you some information and still not be a detective. However, you have struck it right; I am a detective. Now, what is the nature of the information you need?"

"Do you know Lord A——?"

The man gave a start, hesitated a moment, and then said:

"What do you want of Lord A——?"

"I want nothing of him; but I'd like to find out something about him."

"What do you want to find out?"

"You have not answered my question. You have not said whether you knew Lord A—— or not."

"I do know him."

"What do you know about him?"

"I know a great deal about him," said the detective, smiling.

"Will you tell me what you know about him?"

"I will on one condition: Tell me the purpose of this inquiry."

Pierre drew a magnificent gem from his pocket and said, as he held it toward the detective:

"That will explain my purpose."

"What do you mean to do with that?"

"Present it to you."

"Why should you present it to me?"

"Because I like you, and I want you to be my friend. Yes, I have taken a great fancy to you, and it gives me great pleasure to make you a present."

"It is not my custom to accept presents."

"Listen to me: my inquiries are all straight and fully justified."

"You need not buy the information."

"But you do not seem disposed to give it to me."

"I will if you tell me why you seek it, and that is a cheaper way to gain your point than by parting with your gem."

"Oh, I give away gems when the fancy strikes me!"

The detective glanced at our hero in a sharp manner and said:

"You run a great risk, my young friend."

"How so?"

"There is something suspicious in the fact that you are ready to give away valuable jewels. It may come in the way of my duty to arrest you."

"On what grounds could you arrest me?"

"On suspicion."

"If you were to do so, I couldn't be held. I can give a good account of myself."

"In what way?"

"I have letters to the greatest bankers in London. It would prove an unfortunate incident for you were you to arrest me."

"Where are you from?"

"India."

"Will you show me your credentials?"

Pierre drew from his pocket a letter addressed to one of the best known banking firms in London and handed it to the detective. The detective read it over and said:

"This is all right, provided you are the party spoken of in this letter."

"I am the party."

"Very well: I will take your word for it. Now tell me why you seek to know Lord A——."

"I wish to make some inquiries of him for the benefit of a person who has interests in India. I do not wish to approach him until I learn something concerning him."

"How did you chance to address your inquiries to me?"

"I determined to consult with a detective. I lay in wait for one around Scotland Yard. You were the first one who came forth. I followed you here; and I think you are just the man I am looking for."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because you appear to be an honest man."

"Thank you. I wish I could aid you; but I can not unless you open up."

"I am sorry to have interrupted your meal," said Pierre; and he rose from the table as though about to depart.

"Don't hurry away," said the detective.

"There is no use of my staying any longer. You say you can not help me."

"Let's see. All you seek is information, you say?"

"Yes."

"All right. Ask your questions, and I will see if I can answer them."

Pierre resumed his seat, and started in to ask some very pertinent questions.

"Is Lord A—— an honorable man?" he began.

"All lords are supposed to be honorable men."

"What is his general reputation?"

"He is a lord."

"Is he a bachelor?"

"A widower, I believe."

"You are not disposed to answer my questions, I see, so I will go."

"I will answer your questions fully, if you will give me some clew as to their purpose; and, what is more, I can give you information that no other man in London can give you as well."

Pierre pondered for some time, and then said:

"I was requested by certain people in India to look up a young lady who was carried away from Calcutta several years ago."

"Where do you expect to find the lady?"

"Somewhere in England."

"How old is the young lady?"

"Between seventeen and eighteen."

"What is her station in life?"

"She is the orphan daughter of two missionaries who died in India. She was placed in charge of a lady of good family. She also died, and the girl was brought to England by comparative strangers."

"Who seeks her now?"

"A party who knows that she has certain interests in India—property interests of value."

"Then the girl is a lost heiress?"

"Yes."

"Have you any clew as to her whereabouts?"

"Since my arrival in England I have learned that a girl answering her description was under the care of a lady residing near Leamington. But she ran away from her for some reason, and I have since obtained information which leads me to believe that Lord A—— has become interested in the girl."

There came a look of great interest to the face of the detective, and he asked:

"Is the girl handsome?"

"She is a beautiful, very beautiful."

"Did you ever see the girl?"

"Yes; within a week."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I met her accidentally. I did not at the time suspect her identity, and when I did so she had disappeared."

"What leads you to suspect that Lord A—— has become interested in her?"

"I think I have answered your questions fairly," said Pierre, abruptly.

"Yes, you have; but in the interest of the girl tell me more about her."

"I can not."
 "Why?"
 "I am not fully satisfied that my suspicions are well founded."
 "I may be of great aid to you."
 "You ask me questions; but you do not answer mine."
 "Can I trust you?"
 "You can."
 "In my opinion Lord A—— is a villain. It would be a dangerous thing for a young lady to fall under his eye were she beautiful and helpless."
 "The girl I seek is both."
 "And you think she is under the care of Lord A——?"
 "It is merely a suspicion."
 "Founded on some information?"
 "Yes."
 "Why not confide in me more fully? I may be of service to you."
 "I will be frank with you, sir. I do not seek the aid of any one. All I need is information. I should like to know the habits and haunts of Lord A——."
 "He is not in London."
 "He was in London within a day."
 "Yes; he left town this morning."
 "Do you know where he went?"
 "I suspect that he went to his country home."
 "Did he go alone?"
 "Yes; but that would not indicate anything. He may have sent some one under the care of his servants."
 "He has a large income?"
 "He has."
 "He is an unscrupulous man?"
 "That is his general reputation."
 "Will you tell me where his house is located?"
 "I will do more: I will accompany you to his house, and aid you in any way you may suggest, if you will tell me on what your suspicions are founded."
 "I do not need your aid; and my suspicions are founded on a very slight basis; but I consider them worth investigation."
 "You had better let me get to work on this case. I know Lord A—— well. You may make some blunder. He is a very cunning man."
 "I do not need your aid; all I need is the necessary information."
 The detective considered a moment, and then gave Pierre all the information he needed, and the latter again proffered the gem.
 "No, I can not accept any reward. There is only one thing I will ask of you, and that is that you will report back to me."
 "If I feel that I need your services, I will do so."
 A few moments later our hero was on the way back to his hotel.

CHAPTER XXII.

On the morning following the interview with the detective, Pierre met the woman Sarah. He gave her all the information he had obtained, and she asked:

"What do you propose to do?"
 "I propose to go the country home of the noble lord."
 "You must be careful."
 "Why?"
 "You are being shadowed."
 "By whom?"
 "As far as I can make out, you are under a double shadow."
 "Who are the shadowers?"
 "Amrac and his rascals are on your track. You are in great peril. They are relentless: they only await a chance to assassinate you."
 "And who is the other shadower?"
 "I suspect now that it is the man from Scotland Yard."
 "I fear that I was very indiscreet last night. That detective may put Lord A—— on his guard."
 "I think not. He may shadow you, though. But I don't think you need fear him. Indeed, he may be a protection to you. But you must look out for the minions of Amrac: they mean murder."
 Our hero thought over the scene between Amrac and himself, and he reached the conclusion that the fellow had probably got over his scare, and had indeed become dangerous.
 "What do you propose to do?" asked the woman.
 "I desire to go down to Lord A——'s country place; but we may be too late now."
 "We will be in time. But we must first arrange to throw these people off your track. No one must follow you down there."
 "It might be a good thing if the detective did follow me. I may need his aid."
 "But Amrac's thugs may follow you."
 "What had I better do?"
 "Give them the slip."
 "How can I arrange that?"
 "Disguise yourself as a woman."
 "That's a good idea. But will we have time to arrange such a disguise?"
 "I can arrange it in few hours."
 "I can't spare the time: I intended to take the train to-day."
 "It is better to get away at night. We will not travel by the cars from London. No, no; we will go afoot till we get well outside the city, and then secure a vehicle to carry us to the next railway station, where we will board the train. I have already arranged a plan whereby you may get to a place to disguise yourself without being successfully followed."
 "What is your plan?"
 "You must not go direct to the place where we are to meet; but take a zigzag course: go up one street and down another, and thus manage to throw every one off your track."

"How will I know whether any one is on my track or not?"
 "You must assume that there is: be suspicious of every one, and when fully satisfied that you are not being pursued, wander along in the vicinity of St. Paul's Church, and at an opportune moment I will join you. I will then lead you to a place where you can assume the disguise, and together we will leave London. I am now fully convinced that it was Emily Thorne who fell exhausted to the pavement. I am as fully satisfied that the girl is now at the country home of Lord A——."
 "What leads you to be so positive of it?"
 "The fact that Lord A—— left London this morning."
 The two walked away together, and after going a short distance they came to a crowded thoroughfare, and were soon mingled with a great throng of people.
 "I will leave you now," said Sarah; and she darted away.
 Pierre threaded his way along through the crowd until he came to the corner of a side street, and was about to turn off to a more deserted part of the great city when he felt a touch upon the arm. He looked up and recognized the detective, who said:
 "Walk right along. I wish to talk with you."
 Pierre was annoyed; but he said nothing.
 "Are you aware that you are being shadowed?" asked the detective, after they had turned the corner.
 "Yes; I observe now that you have been shadowing me."
 "I came upon you accidentally; but I have discovered that some very dangerous-looking men are following you."
 "Is that so?"
 "Yes. Do you know their purpose?"
 "It can not be a good one."
 "Do you wish to throw these fellows off your track?"
 "Yes."
 "I can aid you to do it."
 "You are very kind; but I do not think they can do me any harm."
 "They are bad-looking fellows; regular assassins, to my mind."
 Pierre thought a moment. An idea came to him, and he said.
 "I will avail myself of your services."
 Our hero and the detective held a few moments' conversation, and arranged a plan. Pierre had decided that he would avail himself of the detective to throw the thugs off his track, and the plan arranged was a good one.
 "I am very sorry you do not make a full confidant of me," said the detective.
 "I can not take you into my full confidence at present; but you will never have reason to regret entering my service. I expected to be followed. You have discovered that men were on my track, and you can aid me in throwing those fellows off."
 "What sort of men are they, young sir?"
 "I have reason to believe that they are professional assassins."
 "Has any one an interest in your death?"
 "It would appear so from the fact that these men are on my track."
 "Well, what do you wish to do, have them placed under arrest?"
 "No; all I desire is to give them the slip. I do not wish to have them following me."
 "That can be easily accomplished."
 We will here state that the detective had assured himself as to the character of our hero. He had visited the banker referred to in the letter Pierre had shown him and had received information satisfactory enough to lead him to conclude that our hero was an honorable young man.
 As stated, Pierre and the detective had arranged a plan. While doing so they had walked quite a distance, and had reached the Thames Embankment. Here they separated, and our hero strolled along alone.
 In the meantime the detective, who had fallen some distance in the rear, discovered that two men were following Pierre. Fortune favored the detective. He met a fellow officer, and he signaled "business" to the latter, and a moment later the two officers were walking along together. Detective number one indicated a little plan to his fellow officer, and the double trail continued until detective number two suddenly approached a man, seized hold of him, and demanded:
 "What is your name?"
 The man—a dark-faced fellow—was taken all aback, and he said:
 "I am a gentleman, sir! You have no right to question me."
 "I have seen you before," said the officer. "I think you are the man I have been looking for."
 "It is not true. I have done nothing to render myself liable to arrest."
 At about the same instant detective number one had tackled a second man under about the same circumstances. The second man betrayed considerable excitement when the officer accosted him and said:
 "You are the fellow I have been looking for."
 "What right have you to molest me?" asked the man, indignantly.
 "I am an officer; you are a suspicious character."
 "You have made a mistake, sir."
 "Come with me, and we will see."
 "I don't see what right you have to arrest me, and I refuse to go with you."
 "If you do not accompany me, I will take you forcibly."
 "Where would you take me?"
 "But a short distance."
 While the two officers held their men, Pierre, who had stood in the background and beheld both arrests, knew that the men would be detained while he made his way to meet Sarah.
 The detectives brought their captives together, and as the fellows were really rogues, they did not make the vigorous protest they would have made under other circumstances. Consequently the detectives held them for a long time, plying them with questions.

Our hero, meanwhile, had started to meet Sarah. He found her awaiting him at the appointed place.

"I have been awaiting you some for time," said the woman. "Are you sure you have given your shadowers the slip?"

"Yes, I am sure."

"Then come with me."

Sarah led Pierre to a neighborhood where there was a row of small one-and-a-half-story houses. One of these she entered.

"We are very fortunate," she said, after Pierre had told her how the detective had aided him to throw the thugs off the track.

Sarah gave our hero certain instructions, and led him into a room. Pierre rather enjoyed the prospect of masquerading in women's clothes, and he set to work to rig himself up in the toggery which Sarah had provided for him. In a short time he appeared before Sarah got up as a very respectable-looking young lady.

In the meantime Sarah also had been busy transforming herself into a man. While Pierre assumed the rôle of a young girl, she had assumed the rôle of an old man, and her disguise was even more successfully assumed than was that of her companion.

"Very good!" exclaimed Sarah, on beholding the really handsome young girl. "It will bother any one to detect the fact that you are disguised."

"And your disguise is perfect," said our hero. "Now let us start at once."

The two left the house and walked beyond the limits of the city, and well on in the afternoon they succeeded in hiring a vehicle to carry them to the town of N—, where they boarded a railway carriage and in less than an hour they arrived in a small town near which was situated the old manor house where Lord A— resided.

They found lodgment at a small hostelry in the town, and Sarah gave it out that she was traveling for the benefit of her daughter's health.

Upon the second day after their arrival their trunks arrived, having been sent down by Harry Blankway.

The first two days were spent by Sarah and our hero in looking around and making inquiries. To their surprise, they learned that it was not known that Lord A— was at his country house. No one had seen him, and it was supposed that he was in London.

Pierre had made several journeys to the vicinity of the old manor, which was a rambling stone building, and appeared to be occupied by a few servants. He had been prowling around one afternoon, and upon his return to his lodgings he said to Sarah:

"I propose to enter that house to-night."

"You had better wait until we discover some clew."

"We will never discover any clew waiting around here; and in the meantime the girl may be in peril."

That night Pierre got himself up in male attire and started for the manor house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PIERRE had prepared himself for whatever he might encounter. It was a moonlight night, rather cool and chilly. He reached the park surrounding the manor house, leaped over the wall, and started off under the trees toward the old manor house.

Our hero had proceeded but a short distance when he heard a low growl, and turning beheld a dog bounding toward him. It was an immense hound. Pierre halted and waited for the dog to approach, and when about to spring, the animal suddenly fell over, as though he had been shot, and lay rigid and lifeless, a victim to that mysterious force which was the secret and protection of our hero. The spell was soon removed; but all spirit had vanished from the terrified hound, and he sneaked away with his tail between his legs.

Pierre resumed his way; but had not gone far when he was again brought to a halt. A man had leaped from behind a tree and confronted him, and the fellow held a leveled gun aimed at our hero's head.

"Who comes there?" came the demand.

Pierre made no answer, and the man exclaimed.

"Answer, or I shoot!"

"Who are you?" demanded Pierre, who wanted to gain time, for the man stood beyond the limit of his mysterious projective force.

"It does not matter who I am. I want to know who you are."

Pierre was edging up toward the man with the gun, and the latter called out:

"Stand where you are, or I shoot!"

"I am a friend of Lord A—'s."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I am on a visit to his lordship."

Pierre was imperceptibly drawing closer and closer to the man.

"Visitors to his lordship do not approach the manor by stealing along across the lawn."

"I have lost my way."

"Throw up your hands!"

The command came at the right moment, for Pierre had now approached to within the right distance to use his power. He did throw up his hands, and the man with the gun became rigid and the weapon fell from his grasp.

Pierre approached, seized the gun, and hurled it away. He then gently laid him down and removed the spell.

The fellow lay speechless with terror and surprise, and Pierre let drop the cloak in which he was enveloped, and stood revealed a strange-looking object, clad in a white gown falling from his neck to his feet, and he was indeed a most ghostly-looking object.

"Fellow," exclaimed Pierre, "if you would live, answer me: Is his lordship, your master, at home?"

The man's teeth chattered, and he did not seem able to say a word as he gazed upon what he evidently considered to be an apparition.

"If you would save your life, answer my question."

"His lordship is at the manor," the man finally answered.

"Did he come alone?"

"Yes."

"Did any one arrive ahead of him?"

"No."

"You are not answering me truthfully."

"On my life, I am answering you to the best of my ability!"

Pierre tied the man between two trees—tied him so that he could not free himself under any circumstances—and moved on toward the old building. He walked around to where he knew the library was located and looked in. There sat his lordship in a big chair before a table on which stood a bottle and several glasses.

Pierre had studied well the bearings of the house and easily gained an entrance. He proceeded along the broad hall until he reached the library. The door stood ajar, and he carefully pushed it open and entered the room. His lordship was sitting with his back toward the door. Our hero stepped a few paces further into the room and halted. His lordship was indulging in a soliloquy, and was so deeply engrossed in his musings that he did not appear to hear any sound save that of his own voice.

"It is strange," he muttered. "I have the richest prize in all the world in my possession, and yet my conscience makes me a coward. Again and again have I resolved to seize and enjoy the bliss within my grasp; but something causes me to hold back. I am repelled by some inward warning. I never felt such a hesitation before. But I shall overcome this feeling, and then I will be the happiest man on earth."

Pierre thought he could interpret the full meaning of his lordship's musings.

"It is mine. Yes, yes; this bliss is at my call, and yet I hesitate. I don't know why."

At this instant his lordship was startled by a voice, and the inquiry came:

"Would you know why, Lord A—?"

His lordship uttered a cry of surprise and alarm, and, leaping to his feet, turned and beheld the dark-clad figure standing in the room. An instant he gazed, and then, reaching down, attempted to seize a pistol that was lying on the table; but strangely his arm suddenly became paralyzed; he could not move it. A look of terror overspread his face as he realized his sudden helplessness.

"Sit down, my lord!" commanded Pierre, at the same time withdrawing the electric shock.

Again his lordship sought to grasp the weapon, and again his arm became powerless. He looked around wildly and muttered:

"Am I asleep?"

"No, your lordship; you are very much awake."

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"You will learn who I am in due time. Sit down; I wish to have a talk with you."

His lordship sought to reach for a bell to ring for help; but again his arm became powerless.

"Now you may as well sit down, my lord. You will be compelled to listen to me."

Lord A— was a man of courage; but seeing that the chances appeared to be against him he sat down.

"Although you are an unbidden guest, I will ask you to be seated," he said.

Pierre took a seat and said:

"I presume you are surprised to see me, my lord."

"I am."

"I have come a long distance to have a talk with you."

"Indeed! I certainly ought to feel grateful to you for taking so much trouble just to have a chat with me; but my gratitude would be far greater if you would tell me what manner of being I have the honor to entertain. What do you wish to say to me?"

"I came to warn you, sir."

"Against what?"

"Your evil ways."

"You are very kind to come so far, at such a time, and in so mysterious a way, to warn me. Am I a very wicked man?"

"You are."

"You are certainly very frank!"

"Yes; I am not here to mince matters."

"What would you have me do?"

"Reform your ways; encourage the good angel in its strivings with you. You intend a terrible crime, my lord. I bid you hesitate and consider ere it is too late."

A pallor overspread his lordship's face, and he said:

"You appear to know a great deal concerning my intentions."

"More than you have any idea of."

"Do you come from the spirit-land?"

"No; I came from London."

"And you came here to warn me?"

"Yes."

"I am intending some particular act of wickedness, you say. Please tell me what it is."

Pierre looked his lordship straight in the eye and said:

"You hold a beautiful and innocent girl a prisoner in this house."

"Be you man or ghost, you lie!" came the impetuous retort.

Pierre laughed in a sardonic manner, and his lordship said:

"What you say does not appall me. I do not fear you."

"And yet you know I speak the truth. You have a beautiful and innocent girl a prisoner in this house, and your intentions toward her are vile. But I am here: she shall be rescued. In the meantime I wish you to improve the lesson of the hour."

"Again I say, be you man or spirit, you lie!"

"Oh, no, your lordship; I speak the truth, and you know it, and I would advise you to make a full confession, lest evil come upon you."

"I defy you and all the evil you promise. I tell you that you lie! Now do your worst. I do not fear you, whatever you may be."

"It is anger which makes you momentarily brave; but when you feel the chill of death stealing through your veins and paralyzing your heart, your courage will forsake you."

"If you think I fear death, you are mistaken. Again I defy you!"

"Do not invite the terrors that are in store for you if you refuse to confess. Save yourself the humiliation that must follow your present defiant attitude."

"I fear nothing."

"Then in darkness learn what awaits you!"

Pierre waved his hand, and the lamp was extinguished and the room enveloped in darkness. At the same time Lord A— became paralyzed throughout his whole body.

"What think you now, my lord?" exclaimed Pierre, after a moment's silence.

But there came no answer.

Our hero removed the spell, and the light again flashed around the room. He repeated his question.

There came a look of defiance to his lordship's face, instead of the look of terror which Pierre expected to see there, and he asked:

"Is that the best you can do?"

Pierre was disappointed. He had expected that the man would plead in terror to be spared, but he exhibited no signs of fear. He even laughed and said:

"Try it again. I enjoy the sensation."

"You are a vile reprobate!"

"I defy you, all the same."

Pierre did not understand it. He did not know that Lord A— had, when a young man, lived some years in India, and become familiar with the wonderful performances of the native magicians. While he had never witnessed an exhibition of the peculiar power that Pierre possessed the secret of, still, being a very intelligent man, and brave withal, he had not become terrified, and his power of discernment had come to his aid. In other words, he suspected that he was the victim of some occult force.

Nevertheless, Pierre could have killed the wretch had it suited his purpose to do so.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR hero, as stated, was disappointed. He had hoped to terrify the man, but had failed. He did not dare do more than attempt to frighten him. He would not strike the man dead, unless forced to do so in his own defense.

After a few moments consideration, Pierre again caused the light to go out. He then threw off his long cloak, and as he stood in his robe of white, he caused a gray, weird light to pervade the room. After standing for a moment or two in silence he said:

"I will leave you now. This is my first visit to your lordship. When I come again I may decide to take you away with me."

"You know some good tricks, young man, but I am onto you. Beware what you do, or you may learn that I am more powerful than yourself. I know something of the powers which you possess. I warn you never to be seen on my grounds again."

"And I warn you to be careful what you do," said Pierre. "Every act of yours will be recorded; and if you perpetrate any evil it will rise up against you, and you will surely be called upon to expiate your evil deeds."

"Do your worst! I defy you; and the next time I will be prepared for you. I've an idea as to your identity. I suspect that you are a blackmailing villain; but you can make nothing out of me."

Pierre glided from the room, but not from the house. He had failed of his purpose by one method. He determined to depend upon natural devices to accomplish his object. He felt assured that Emily was a prisoner in that house, and he was determined to find her. As stated, he did not leave the house, but found a place where he concealed himself, determined to watch the doings of his lordship.

After the departure of our hero from the room, Lord A— sat for a few moments in deep thought. He was fully assured that his mysterious visitor was some trickster, or possibly an Indian magician, and he resolved to outwit him at all hazards.

After a time his lordship relighted his lamp and looked carefully around. His strange visitor had departed and left no sign behind. His lordship resented himself and muttered:

"That fellow intends to lay around here and watch me, I believe. But we shall see. He may be able to paralyze me with his secret force—a force I can not fathom—but he can not paralyze several men at the same time; and, as I live, if I find him lurking around in this house I will have him shot down like a dog!"

At this moment a man entered the room. He was a coarse-featured fellow, a man possessed of great pluck, as was plainly indicated by his heavy jaw.

"Jim," said his lordship, "I have just had a very mysterious visitor. A fellow has forced his way into this house, and he has brutally insulted me right here in my own library."

"You surprise me, my lord. I did not think you would permit any one to insult you anywhere."

"This fellow had me at a disadvantage."

"Why did you not summon me, my lord?"

"It was impossible for me to do it then."

"And has the man made his escape?"

"I think it possible that he is still in this house."

"If he is, we will make short work of him."

"I wish you would summon Andrew."

"He is at hand, my lord."

And a moment later a second servitor entered his lordship's presence. His lordship armed both men, and also grasped a pistol himself, and said:

"We will now go in search of this man, and if we find him, hold yourselves in readiness to shoot him down as you would a dog, at a signal from me."

"Do you wish us to kill him, my lord?" asked Jim.

"He is an assassin, and he is here to murder me. When I give you the signal, fire, and shoot to kill, as you would a common burglar whom you had come upon unawares."

"Your commands will be obeyed, my lord," said the determined-looking Jim.

Andrew procured a lantern, and the three men left the room and began a thorough search for the intruder; but they could not find any trace of him.

"That fellow is concealed somewhere in this house, I know," said Lord A—.

"We have made a thorough search, my lord," said Jim.

"Still, I am satisfied the assassin is concealed somewhere under this roof; and we must take him, dead or alive."

"I think it would be better to arrest him," suggested Jim.

"That may be the better plan, now that I have had time to think the matter over; but we must catch him, even if it becomes necessary to shoot him down."

"It looks as though he had made his escape, your lordship," said Jim, dubiously.

"I don't think so. I still believe he is concealed somewhere in this house."

"Then we will renew the search."

"Go and get the hound, Jim—the one that was sent me from Virginia—and we will put him on the scent. We will find that man ere I go to sleep this night."

Pierre had found a hiding-place. Indeed, his place of refuge was a simple one, and it appeared singular to him that he had not been discovered. And from his hiding-place he overheard all that had passed, and realized that he was up against a pretty stiff game, as the boys say. He had come to respect the desperate courage of his lordship. He knew that he must make no false move or he would fall a prisoner in their hands. He knew also that the hound would surely find him.

"Hang it!" he muttered, "I am in rather an awkward position, cooped up as I am; but I am in for it, and I shall do the best I can."

Had Lord A— maintained his position he would certainly have captured our hero then and there; but he had moved away while awaiting the coming of the hound; and, taking advantage of his opportunity, Pierre left his hiding-place and succeeded in escaping from the house.

Our hero started to cross the lawn and make his way to the road, when suddenly some one hailed him in a low voice. He came to a halt and looked about, but saw no one. He started once more for road, when suddenly a figure emerged from behind a clump of bushes and was making straight toward him.

Pierre's first impulse was to throw the man under a spell without further ado; but at that instant he heard a voice say:

"Fear not; I am a friend."

The man approached, and our hero recognized the detective who had been of such service to him in London.

"Well, young man, you see I have followed you down here."

Pierre looked at the detective in astonishment.

"You gave me the slip," continued the detective; "but you see I have followed you up."

"What right have you to follow me?"

"We will not argue that question just now. I simply want to tell you that you are making a mistake."

"How so?"

"In not heeding my advice. Now come with me, young man; let us get out of these grounds as soon as possible. You are running a great risk. I told you that Lord A— was a dangerous man. Had you been discovered on these grounds the chances are that you would have been shot down like a dog. You must make a confidant of me, young man; and if you really are engaged in a good cause I will aid you."

Pierre began to realize that he might need the advice and co-operation of a good, true man, such as the detective seemed to be, and he said:

"I am satisfied that you can aid me and that I shall need your aid."

"Ah, you have reached that conclusion, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you give me the slip?"

"I did not think at that time that I would need your services."

"What has caused you to change—"

At that moment there sounded a low growl near them.

"What is that?" exclaimed the detective.

"They are hunting me with a hound," said our hero, calmly.

"Then they know that you are on the premises?"

"Yes."

"It's lucky you have not been shot. But come; we must lose no time in getting away from here."

"We will wait and meet the dog."

"But his master is, no doubt, close behind."

"No matter; I am going to put that dog out of business."

The two men had delayed too long, for the hound was now upon them. But the panting beast suddenly came to a halt, a tremor shook his frame for an instant, and then he stood as silent and motionless as a statue. The poor animal was thrown under the mysterious spell.

The detective had drawn a pistol, and, before Pierre could interpose, he leaped forward, placed his weapon to the animal's ear, and fired. The dog rolled over dead, and the pistol had been held so close that there had been but a smothered report from the weapon.

"Now is our time! We must not be caught here," said the detective.

He ran along under the trees, followed by our hero. The two soon gained the road and proceeded along at a rapid pace, and soon were at quite a distance from the grounds of Lord A—.

"Now, my young friend," said the detective, "you must tell me

what all your doings mean. If I am to aid you I must know what I am about."

Our hero had already partially confided in the detective. He now told him about the girl who had sank to the sidewalk in London in a fainting condition; how Lord A—— had seized her and borne her away to his carriage; his suspicion that the girl was the one he was in search of; and his further suspicion that she was at that moment a prisoner in the manor house.

"What you say may all be true; but you must trust in me. I've something to tell you. Lord A—— is a very powerful man. He is very wealthy, and should he catch you on his premises—and especially if what you say is true—it would go hard with you. He would have you convicted and sent off as a convict in the most remorseless manner. I have no respect for Lord A——. I should like to see him brought to justice; but it would be a difficult matter to have him punished for his many crimes."

"What am I to do—leave the girl in his possession?"

"No; we will rescue her; but we must move carefully. I will aid you, and it will give me great pleasure to see that man's scheme frustrated."

The detective accompanied Pierre to the hotel; and before retiring to obtain some much-needed rest, they agreed to meet in the morning and formulate a plan of campaign against Lord A——.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHILE Pierre and the detective were making their way to the tavern, Lord A—— and his two servitors had made a discovery. They came to the spot where the hound lay dead, and as the man Jim approached the animal's body he ejaculated:

"Great guns! The hound is dead!"

Lord A—— came up an instant later, and, and gazing at the dead animal, exclaimed:

"Why, the dog has been shot!"

"Yes, your lordship."

"That shot was intended for me, no doubt. Are you satisfied now that there was an assassin in the house?"

"You are right, my lord," responded Jim, "and we will follow up the trail."

"No; we will haul off from the trail. This is a matter that must be studied out. We must know what it all means. We will make some investigations to-morrow."

"The mysterious man may be back in London to-morrow."

"I think not. He will linger around here for a purpose."

"And you suspect his purpose, my lord?"

"I do."

Lord A—— returned to his library. He bid his man Jim remain outside the door in the capacity of sentinel; and when once again alone his lordship indulged in long meditation.

"This is all very strange," he soliloquized. "Some men would be frightened at what has occurred here to-night; but I am not. I am puzzled, however. That fellow, whoever he is, possesses some mysterious power—some psychological force; for he certainly did paralyze me; and he extinguished and relighted the lamp at will. There his power ends, however."

"But what is his interest in the girl? And who is she, that she has this strange party interested in her behalf? There is something here for me to investigate. I'll not harm the girl. She is the most beautiful girl in all England."

"There is evidently some mystery connected with her; but I have no reason to fear any one. I have committed no crime. I found her helpless in the street and came to her aid. I brought her here because she was homeless and friendless. Now I have fallen in love with her; and now, by George, I'll do a brave act: I'll make her my wife. She shall become a countess, and then let this mysterious devil who invaded my room rave if he will. Yes, she shall become my bride. I will see this beautiful girl to-morrow and talk the matter over with her. She shall tell me her story, and even though she prove to be a farmer's daughter, if she is worthy, she shall become my honorable wife, and the world can say what it pleases."

His lordship remained for a long time indulging in his musings and his mutterings; but finally he went to his chamber and retired.

On the morning following the incidents we have recorded, Lord A—— arose at a late hour. He partook of his morning meal, and then had a meal of many delicacies prepared; and, strangely enough, he took the tray and proceeded to his own room. Arriving at his room, he set the tray down on a table, then crossed the room and touched a spring, and a secret passage was revealed as a door flew open. He took up the tray and walked along the passage until he reached a narrow stair-way. He ascended this stair-way, and at length he halted in a circular vestibule facing a door. He knocked at this door, and in a few seconds there came a voice from the inside bidding him enter.

His lordship entered the room and confronted a most beautiful young lady, who was sitting in large, easy-chair reading a book. He set the tray on the table beside the young lady and said:

"I have brought up your breakfast myself this morning."

He smiled at the idea of a real lord acting as a waiter and attendant.

"You are very kind," said the girl, smiling in a sad manner.

We will here state that since the fair prisoner had been under his care her jailer had treated her with the utmost kindness and respect. She did not know, in fact, that she was a prisoner. She had only revealed to his lordship that she had been fleeing from peril; and he, observing her wondrous beauty, pretended merely to be a kind and sympathetic friend.

The girl did not know that her benefactor was a nobleman. She only knew that he had befriended and been kind to her.

"I have had a delicate, tasty breakfast prepared for you," said

his lordship, in a suave manner, "and I hope it will please you. After you have finished your meal, I should like a few moments' conversation with you, if you don't object."

"I have no objection," said the girl.

Lord A—— left the room and returned to his own apartment. He summoned his trusty servant Jim, and after giving him some orders, again sought the presence of his fair charge.

"Emily," he said, "I desire to have a little chat with you."

"The girl, although looking very sad, nodded assent, and his lordship continued:

"I have a confession to make. I told you I was the agent of a great estate; that is true; but I am more: I am the owner of a great estate. I am also a peer of the realm. I am Lord A——. Have you not heard of me?"

"No; I never heard of you."

"Now that I have told you something about myself, I ask you to be equally frank, and give me some information about yourself. Who are you, and what was the peril you were escaping from when I met you?"

"Please do not press me for an explanation now."

"Yes; I am anxious to know who you are and what it is you fear. I have powerful reasons for seeking the information."

"I can tell you nothing, my noble friend."

"And why not?"

"There are reasons why I dare not speak. I am without a friend in the world. I do not know what I shall do. I wish I were dead."

"You must not speak in this manner. You must not say that you have not a friend in the world, for you have a good and powerful friend; and if you will confide in me, I will protect you from every peril."

"I can not confide in you, for I know you could not aid me; but I will ask a favor of you."

"I will grant any favor you ask."

"I thank you in advance. I need money. My friend—I trust you are my friend—I have something of great value which I have concealed and retained for years. I wish to convert it into money. I did not dare offer it for sale myself; but you can dispose of it for me, and with the money I will go away."

"Why need you go away?"

"I must go away."

"No, no; you must not leave me."

"Do not urge me to stay. You have promised to do me a favor, and I trust you will fulfill your promise."

"You say you have something of value that you wish to dispose of in order to obtain money?"

"Yes."

"You need give yourself no further anxiety about that. You may consider the article, whatever it is, sold at its full value."

"You are very kind, sir."

As the girl spoke, she drew from her bosom a small bag, and taking from it a jewel of great value laid it upon the table.

Lord A—— took the gem in his hand, and a look of delight overspread his face. He was an expert in gems, and he saw at a glance that the one he held was indeed a jewel of rare beauty and of great value.

"I think I can sell that for enough money to carry me to the Continent, can't I?" asked the girl.

"Why, my dear child, that gem is of almost priceless value! I would not sell it if I were you."

"I must. I am penniless, and need money. If you will sell it, I can pay you for what expense you have gone to in my behalf and go away."

"Why did you not sell the gem yourself?"

"I did not dare offer it for sale."

"Why not?"

"There might be some suspicion attached to the fact of a girl in my position offering a valuable gem for sale."

"That is true. And you wish me to dispose of it for you?"

"Yes; if you will."

"I will do better than that. I shall make you a loan on the gem, and when you come into your fortune you can redeem it. The chances are this is a family heirloom."

The girl made no answer, and Lord A—— asked:

"Is it not a family heirloom?"

"I suspect it is."

"Now, you must tell me your story. I may aid you in securing your fortune."

"My fortune? I do not understand."

"Tell me about yourself and I will explain."

"I can tell you nothing about myself, sir."

"It may be to your interest to trust me."

"I know but little about myself."

"What is your name?"

"Emily Jansen."

"Is that your real name?"

"I do not believe that it is."

"Then you indulge certain suspicions?"

The girl made no answer.

"Come; tell me all you know—all you suspect."

"No, sir; it is not needful that I should speak of myself. I am very grateful to you, however, and if you will dispose of the gem I will pay my indebtedness to you and go my way."

"That would never do. You shall never leave me."

"Never leave you, sir?" repeated the girl, a look of surprise overspreading her face. "I must leave you. If I remain here I will be discovered."

"Discovered by whom?"

"Oh, sir, I can not tell you!"

"But you must tell me."

"No; my secret is not worth telling."

"Ah! then there is a secret?"

"I do not mean a secret. I should have said that my history is not worth telling."

"Now, my dear girl, there are reasons why you must confide in me. I may be able to explain many things to you; and besides—"

His lordship stopped short; but the girl did not press him for an answer.

"Come, Emily; confide in me."

"I can not confide in any one. All I ask of you is to dispose of the gem."

"It is not necessary to dispose of this gem. You ought not to think of such a thing as parting with such a precious and valuable heirloom, and you shall not be forced to do so."

"I do not understand you, sir. What do you mean?"

"Emily, you are a beautiful girl—"

The girl raised her hand deprecatingly.

"Indeed you are a beautiful girl, Emily, and I love you."

"Oh, sir, how can you—how dare you speak to me thus?"

"I speak the truth. Mine is an honorable love. I will make you my wife. I am a nobleman, and I am rich. You will become a great lady, and—"

"Stop, sir! I do not love you!"

"But you will learn to love me."

"Never!"

"Tut, tut! My dear girl, consider. I am an honorable man, a man of assured position, and I offer you marriage."

"I care not. I do not love you, and I shall never learn to love you."

"Why not? Why are you so positive?"

Emily made his lordship no answer.

"I will make you the happiest woman on earth, Emily."

"No; it can never be."

"Do you love another?"

"No. I shall never love any one as you mean."

"Emily, we will talk of this later on. Now let me speak to you merely as a friend. I will aid you to recover your fortune."

"What do you mean when you speak about my fortune, sir?"

"You see I know something of you and your history."

"Impossible!"

"It is true, nevertheless. There was a man here last night inquiring about you."

"A man here inquiring about me?" ejaculated the girl, a pallor coming over her face. "Who was the man?"

"I had never seen him before; but I led him on to make several admissions."

"Oh, sir, I have been tracked to this house!"

"Yes, it is true; but you need not fear."

"I must flee at once."

"I tell you that you need not fear."

"You do not know, sir—you do not understand."

"Yes, I know a great deal; and I tell you that you are safe here."

"Oh, but you do not know! Your own life will be in peril."

"I do not fear for my life; and, what is more, the fellow who came here has no proof that you are under this roof. He need never know you are here."

"Oh, sir, we're in great peril!"

"You are unnecessarily frightened. I tell you that you are safe here."

"I must flee away for your sake as well as my own. The man who is pursuing me cares not for nobility. He cares for nothing—for no one. He would strike down the queen were she to stand in his way. He is a devil."

"And yet you need not fear him. As long as you are under my care you can be at perfect peace; and in the meantime I will see what I can do with the gem. But I do wish you would confide in me. If you will, and I decide that you are really in peril, I will aid you to escape."

A moment the girl hesitated, and then said:

"I will tell you all I know about myself."

Emily was thoughtful for a moment, and then began:

"All I can remember is that in my early childhood I was surrounded by kind and gentle people. I was under the immediate care of a nurse, a dark-faced, kindly woman, whom I loved. I remember sailing in a great ship with strangers, save that my nurse accompanied me. I remember that the ship reached England and that I was taken to a house in London. There was a park nearby, and I was allowed to play in it every fair day. One afternoon when playing in the park a dark-faced man talked with me; and later, I remember, I was under the care of this dark-faced man, and my dear nurse was no longer with me; nor have I ever seen her since."

"As I grew older I became more thoughtful, and sought to find out something about myself. An impression ran through my mind that there was some mystery connected with myself and my affairs. Once I overheard a conversation between the dark-faced man and the woman under whose care I had been placed. From what they said I learned that they believed I was a great heiress; and the man said he would make me his wife and secure my fortune. I feared and hated this man. A few days ago I learned that he was to visit me, and I determined to run away. I did so, and was pursued; but a young man, whom I met on the road, rescued me, and I traveled on to London. I wandered around London until, tired and weak for lack of food, I fell exhausted, when you kindly came to my rescue. And this, sir, is all I know about myself."

"But this gem?"

"That was sewed in my garments by my nurse, who bid me never part with it."

"You do not know what became of your nurse?"

"I do not."

Lord A—— continued to question Emily, but elicited no further information of importance, and finally left her, with the assurance that she would be safe until he could decide what it would be best to do under all the circumstances.

Emily, although a brave girl, was not as single-minded as she pretended to be. She feared Lord A—— had divined her purpose, and she determined to escape from his care as soon as he should give her the money for the gem. She had determined to assume an air of trustfulness—a trustfulness, however, that she did not feel.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON the morning following Pierre's visit to the manor house, he and the detective held a second consultation. The latter said:

"I have been up to the manor house this morning."

"Indeed!" said Pierre. "You must have got up very early."

"I did; and I have made a discovery. Lord A——'s house is guarded like an ancient castle. He has sentries out in every direction."

"And what do you argue from that?"

"I argue that your suspicions are correct. The girl is under his care. He has determined to retain possession of her for some purpose."

"We must move against him at once. I will go to some magistrate and lay my case before him."

"No, no," said the detective, laughing; "there is no use of our doing that. You must remember that you are combating a man who controls the magistrate and all the other officials of this bailiwick."

"What had we better do?"

"We will wait until to-night, and gain admission to that house."

"But you say it is well guarded."

"By servants only; and if I can not outwit a few country servants, I will go out of business."

"All right," said Pierre. "And now listen to me: If you aid me to rescue the girl I will make you a rich man. Money is of no consequence to me. We will take all the chances, and, if necessary, flee from England. I will make you so rich that you can forfeit your position and say good-bye to England forever."

"You need not fear. We will secure the girl, and we will proceed in such a manner as to effectually cover our tracks. We must go in to win, and we will. I have partly matured a plan. We will wait until to-night and then carry out our plan. In the meantime we will be compelled to play a little game. Lord A—— will send his emissaries out to spot any strangers who may be in town and watch them. I shall transform myself, and you must go away."

"No need for me to go away. I will disappear all right."

And Pierre explained his trick.

"Good enough!" exclaimed the detective. "Get into the hotel at once and assume your rôle of a young girl, and in the meantime I will lay around and keep my eyes open. To-night at ten o'clock come forth from the hotel and I will meet you."

"Remember one thing," said our hero: "you will become a rich man if we succeed in rescuing the girl."

"We will succeed. You must not entertain any idea of failure."

Our hero did fear that the detective might conclude terms with Lord A——, and he wished to hold out to him the tempting bait of a possible fortune; and, in order to show how rich he was, he exhibited to the astonished detective a whole handful of sparkling gems, which he carried loosely in his pockets.

The detective was astonished, and he said:

"I see what is running through your mind; but you need have no fear as to my fidelity. And now go and get into your disguise."

Pierre returned to the tavern, while the detective took to the woods, as he would have expressed it.

After having assumed his disguise, our hero held several long talks with the woman Sarah. He told her everything that had occurred, including his meeting with the detective, and in conclusion he said:

"The chances are, Sarah, that we will rescue Emily to-night, and I want you to be ready to receive her. She will recognize you. We will have a conveyance at hand and drive rapidly away. I think it would be wise for us to take passage as soon as possible for India; and afterward, under certain circumstances, we may sail for the United States."

Late in the evening Pierre, having perfected all his arrangements, went forth to meet the detective. Although he was early, and did not expect to meet him for some little time, the detective was on hand, and greeted our hero with this announcement:

"It happened as I predicted. A man was here to look you up, and it was fortunate you were under the rôle of a woman, or he would have had you under lock and key now."

"I know of his inquiries; and I am surprised that a man as sharp as he could have been so easily deceived."

"He may not have been deceived. I have reason to think that he made some discoveries somehow or other, for since his return to the manor extra pickets have been stationed about the grounds. In view of these developments I have reached the conclusion that it would be wise to defer action for a few days."

"I will not consent to that."

"We may make a mistake if we go to-night. The place is too well guarded."

"We can place the guards *hors de combat* in detail."

"Yes, we could, if there were only a few of them."

"With your help I can take complete possession of that house to-night."

"I can not understand why you assume such confidence. I tell you that it would be foolhardy for us to take the risk of trying to enter that place while it is so well guarded."

"You have never witnessed an exhibition of what I can do but once, and then you did not recognize it. The hound that you shot last night was a helpless brute before you placed the pistol to his head; and I tell you we can render every one of those guards helpless without even a whisper. We can go there, take absolute pos-

session of the house, find the girl, carry her off, and make good our escape."

"All smooth sailing in theory," remarked the detective.

"Stand over there for a moment," said Pierre.

"What are you up to now?"

"I wish to demonstrate something."

The detective stepped away a distance of ten feet, when Pierre ordered him to halt, and, raising his hand, our hero said:

"Now advance toward me again."

The detective did not move; but there came over his face a look of terror.

"Why do you not obey me?"

Still the detective remained silent and motionless.

Pierre laughed, and, waving his hand, released the detective from the spell.

The detective was somewhat dazed for an instant, then he said:

"Is it possible that you are responsible for the paralytic stroke that seized me? For I was certainly paralyzed: I could neither move nor speak."

"Do you doubt now our ability to take possession of that house?"

"Is it possible that you paralyzed me?"

"Will you try it again?"

"No, no! I am satisfied. If you can wield such a wonderful power as this on all occasions and under any circumstances you can do almost as you please."

"I can call this power to my aid at any time," said our hero; "but I never use it except in the interests of justice."

"Well, I have no further opposition to offer. What is your plan?"

"I propose to proceed to those grounds to-night. Every sentinel we meet will get a paralytic stroke, and you can bind each one hand and foot. We will then make our way into the manor house, and administer the same dose to whoever we meet there, even his lordship himself, after which we will be free to search the house."

"It will indeed be marvelous if we can carry out this programme successfully."

"We can do it."

"Does your power never fail you?"

"Never."

"And will you explain the mystery?"

"It is enough that you have witnessed my power. And now we will carry out our plans."

"But we must have something wherewith to bind and gag our prisoners as we take them."

"I have provided for that, and I have also provided for our escape. We will flee to the coast. I have secured a boat, and we will sail to France—and this very night."

"And you have secured a boat?"

"Yes. All my plans are complete."

Pierre had, indeed, with the assistance of Harry Blankway, carried out his arrangements as described, and at eleven o'clock he and the detective started for the manor house.

On the way the detective asked many questions, and soon they reached the grounds. They scaled the wall and stood for an instant to get their bearings, when suddenly two men, with drawn revolvers, leaped from the shadow of the trees. Instantly they both fell under that terrible spell, and stood motionless and speechless. The detective quickly bound and gagged them, and then proceeded on their way.

They had not gone far when they met another guard armed and ready for the fray; but he too was stricken under a spell, and afterward bound and gagged. So they proceeded, until seven men had been overcome and disposed of, and not a word had been uttered, not even a sound had broke the stillness of the night.

At length they reached the house. Pierre stepped onto the veranda and tapped weirdly on the window glass, and at the same time several muffled explosions were heard. He held his ear close to the window for an instant, and then he darted to the end of the veranda, and suddenly several balls of fire burst forth and the veranda seemed to be in flames. At this instant the window flew open and the man Jim jumped out onto the veranda. He had no sooner appeared upon the scene than he was stricken, bound and gagged, and our hero climbed through the window followed by the detective.

"This is the most marvelous experience of my life!" exclaimed the detective, as they came to a halt in the great hall of the old manor.

"Well, we are in the house, and, as there seems to be no more guards to dispute our progress, we will hunt up his lordship."

"You lead the way," said the detective.

Pierre had taken the bearings of the house when he had visited it on the previous occasion. He led the way to the library; but his lordship was not there. They then proceeded to his sleeping-chamber. At the door of the room they stopped and listened. All was still within, and Pierre opened the door and they stepped across the threshold. A dim light cast its rays around.

"His lordship is not here," whispered the detective.

Pierre, in the meantime, had turned up the light and stood glancing around the room. At length his quick eye fell upon a certain part of the side wall. He crossed the room and examined more closely what appeared to be nothing more than a slightly soiled spot on the decoration of the wall. Instinctively he touched the spot and discerned that underneath there was a spring. He pressed harder; when, lo, a door flew open and a secret passage was revealed!

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "This is great luck!"

"By ginger!" ejaculated the detective; "will wonders never cease?"

Pierre led the way along the passage, and up the stairs at the end of the passage, and finally arrived at the door of the turret-room. They stood and listened for a moment, and then they heard the voices of a man and woman conversing.

"You must not press this matter, sir. I can never become your wife," the woman said.

"You must become my wife; you need a protector," the man responded.

"But I do not love you."

"You will learn to love me. Come; accept my offer, and the ceremony shall take place at once."

"Oh, what shall I do?" exclaimed the girl.

"Emily, there is but one thing for you to do—consent."

"No! I'll die first!"

"Then you absolutely refuse to become my wife?"

"I do."

"Emily, I can not—I shall not—lose you. You will remain a prisoner here until you change your mind; yes, you shall be my prisoner as long as you live."

"Oh, my lord, you can not mean what you say!"

"Yes, I mean every word I say. You shall remain here my prisoner. No one knows that you are here: and no one ever shall know, unless you become my bride. It is a strange thing that I, a peer of the realm, should ask an unknown girl to become my bride; but I always have been a man of strange fancies, and I have determined to make you my wife. You do not realize what an honor you reject. But you will think better of it later on."

"I am friendless, my lord, and in your power. I pray you have pity on me."

Pierre could restrain himself no longer. As the girl's cry for mercy fell upon his ears, he opened the door and, as he stepped in to the room, exclaimed:

"No, Emily, you are not friendless!"

Lord A—gazed in amazement at the two men who had appeared before him so mysteriously, and uttered an exclamation which was profane in the extreme.

"Here I am again, your lordship!" exclaimed our hero. "Do you recognize me?"

"Curse you!" roared the noble lord, and he thrust his hand in his pocket as though to draw a weapon.

But he fell under the spell, and the detective bound him hand and foot, and Pierre said, addressing Emily, who stood petrified with astonishment:

"Come; your imprisonment is at an end!"

The girl appeared to recognize Pierre.

"I am thankful to be rescued from the clutches of that man," Emily said; "but where would you take me?"

"To a friend whom you will recognize—to one whom you love."

The party soon reached the hotel, and Emily was clasped in the arms of her old nurse Sarah. The two were left alone long enough for the Indian woman to make full explanations, and then the whole party entered a carriage that had been provided and were rapidly driven to the coast. A yacht lay at anchor some distance from the shore, and a small boat was drawn up on the sand, with two men in charge of it, awaiting the arrival of the party, and in ten minutes time they were safely aboard the yacht. The little vessel immediately set sail, and the next day they arrived at a little town on the coast of France. Here they remained for a few days, when they proceeded to Paris, where they found Harry and his wife awaiting them.

The detective, who accompanied the party to Paris at the earnest solicitation of Pierre, had picked up a London paper from the table of the hotel parlor, and on the first page was an article entitled "A Spectral Visitation; or, Seein' Things at Night." After reading it the detective immediately sought Pierre and read the article to him. It gave a full account of the happenings on that eventful night at the manor house, and stated that all the men who had been bound and gagged, including his lordship, had remained in their uncomfortable positions until the following morning, when the man Jim was discovered by one of the female servants. The article was written in a humorous vein, which plainly implied that the whole story was regarded as a hoax.

Two weeks following their arrival in Paris the whole party—with the exception of the detective, who had returned to London with a substantial testimonial of our hero's regard—sailed for India, where they tarried long enough for Pierre to settle up his financial affairs. He was now in control of a princely fortune, to say nothing of the almost priceless treasure left to Emily and himself by the old magician.

All his affairs being settled, Pierre, Emily, Sarah, and Harry and his wife set sail for America, and in due time reached San Francisco, and a few days after they landed Emily became the wife of Pierre Bindalais—or John Hamilton, as Pierre learned his rightful name to be when he opened the sealed packet he had taken from the lifeless hand of the old magician.

Our hero and his bride settled down in California, and his wife's old nurse Sarah made her home with them as long as she lived. Pierre—for we hardly comprehend his personality under his new name—promised himself never to make use of his strange power again, but to study and develop it along lines that would make it a benefit to all mankind.

And we think we do not violate his confidence when we state the fact that John Hamilton has made wonderful discoveries while pursuing his investigations in his laboratory overlooking the expansive Pacific, where he has patiently labored for so many years in the interest of science. The world has already been thrilled by the successful operation of the wireless telegraph, which is a development of the force that the old Indian magician discovered so many years ago; but John Hamilton, if he lives to solve the problem, will revolutionize the world by the system which he is developing, for he proposes to operate the machinery of the universe by power generated direct from the atmosphere.